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The Beaver

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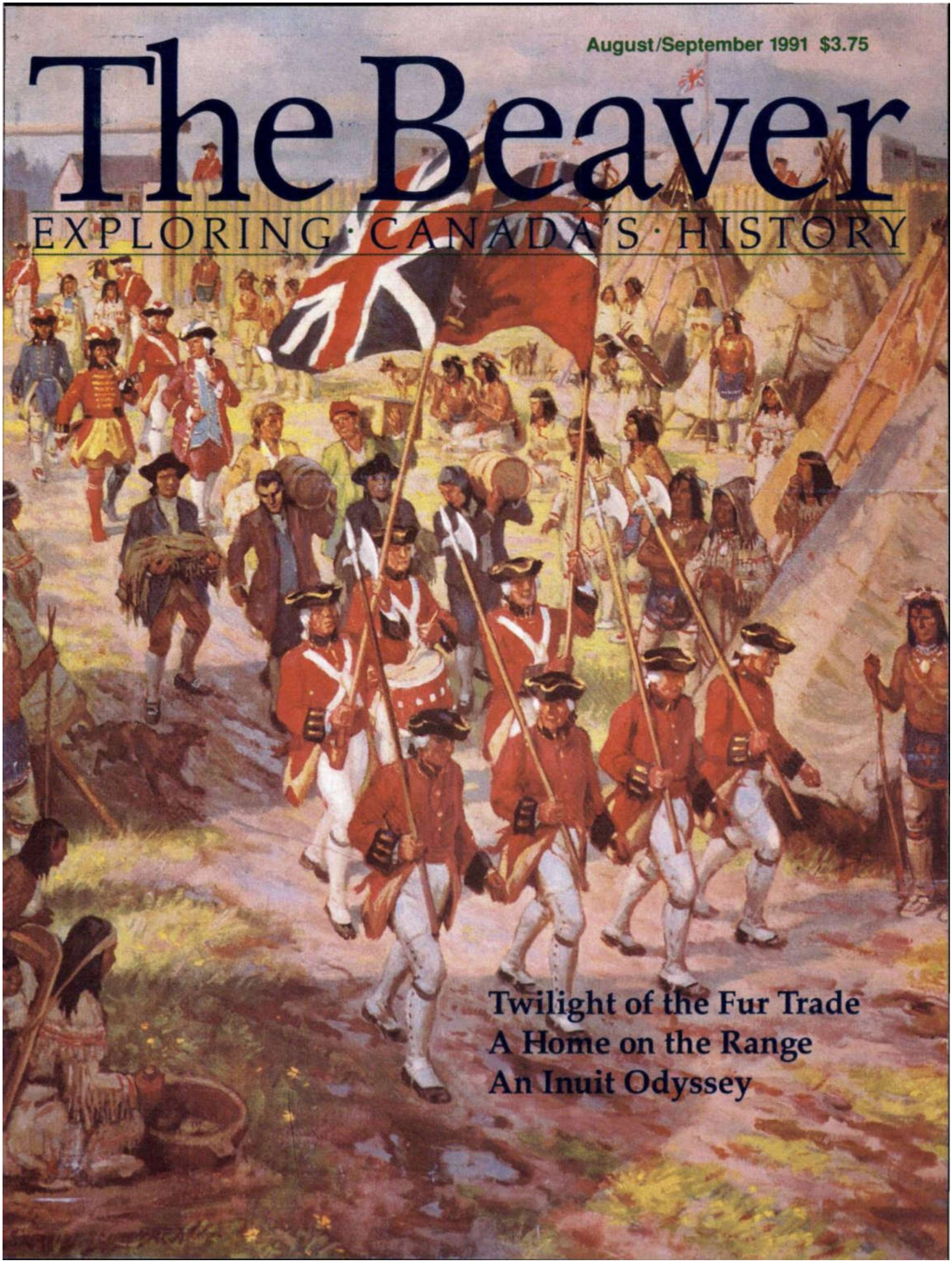

Twilight of the Fur Trade
A Home on the Range
An Inuit Odyssey

The Beaver

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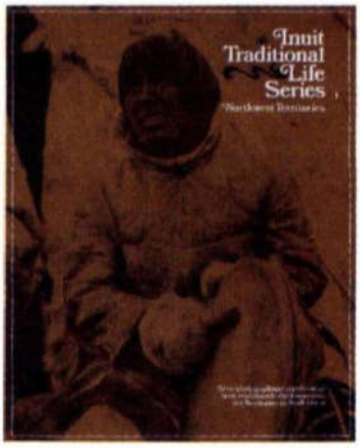

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The Beaver

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'Trading into Hudson's Bay'

From time to time letters arrive at the offices of *The Beaver* addressed to "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay". After more than 300 years an inscription like that has a resoundingly romantic ring to it, even with the added note "Attention, Editor, *The Beaver*".

The "Company of Adventurers" is no longer engaged in the fur trade and yet the romance of three centuries lingers on — even though, in the language of 1670, "Adventurers of England" really meant stay-at-home investors who "adventured" their money in the hope of making more.

Samuel Hearne: The explorer as operatic hero.

Still, we imagine the life of the old time fur trader as one of endless excitement and dramatic events. We have a vision of hard men facing the elements or snug in their forts, as content with their lot as the characters in a boy's adventure story.

Was the fur trade really a romantic adventure? Did those of us who were born too late in history miss something really tremendous? There is plenty of evidence to indicate that many of those engaged in the fur trade and the rough life of the hinterland in days gone by enjoyed it so much that they preferred it above all other callings. "We weare Cesars, being nobody to contradict us" wrote Pierre Radisson, looking back on his life as a trader. Similar sentiments are to be found along the solid shelf of fur trade memoirs published in this century.

The great journeys and feats of endurance performed by such men as Henry Kelsey, Anthony Henday, William Pink, Samuel Hearne, Matthew Cocking, William Tomison and John Rae must have been replete with hardship, danger and misery, but their great fortitude and their determination to carry on indicate that there was something about their life at the edge of the world that exerted a power of fascination that was difficult to resist. A degree of love for such a life must be present, otherwise who would willingly endure all that? Chief Trader A. Dudley Copland, in his memoir *Coplalook*, gives an indication of the dedication that inspired the best men of the fur trade in his comments on a career in the North that covered the years 1923 to 1939: "To the Company I had given many years of my life and my undivided loyalty. I had gone without food in its service and sold the blankets off my bed to maintain its reputation."

Even a cursory glance at the long records of the Canadian fur trade indicates that, from first to last, it offered, more often than not, a life of rigour that frequently passed into real hardship and occasional horror.

The sailor Christopher Middleton, enjoying HBC hospitality with his crew at Churchill one cold winter in the 1740s, placed this dismal entry in his log: "This evening our surgeon came down from the old factory, after cutting off the men's toes, and the flesh of several that were froze and mortified. There are four men at the old factory very bad with the scurvy, twelve at the new factory very ill with the scurvy, the country distemper, and froze; twenty-five at both places, belonging to both ships, not able to go abroad; and several not able to help themselves".

Although the bayside posts could be compared to ships isolated on the ocean, the traders were in generally better health than the mariners of the time because they had access to fresh meat, fresh vegetables and lime juice, as well as to the spruce beer used by the natives to ward off scurvy.

Illness was a constant danger throughout the years of the fur trade, especially for those taken ill on the trail, on distant working parties or at remote posts. Wounds turned septic, sudden attacks of illness and the long list of killing diseases took their toll at the forts, but in those centuries life was precariously balanced wherever you lived; death by illness was as great a threat in London as it was in York Factory. Only in the twentieth century has the shadow of death lessened

for the ordinary person, but even in the eighteenth century traders in their remote habitations were spared, by their isolation, many of the illnesses that devoured large numbers in Europe in those years. E.E. Rich, in an article in *The Beaver* in 1976, points out that "... especially in comparison with others in like circumstances, the health record of the Hudson's Bay men was astonishingly good". Down the centuries the Baymen took pains to see that traders and travellers ate well for their health. From the earliest days crops were grown — we hear of pea and mustard crops in the late seventeenth century — and game of all sorts was gathered in to supplement the provisions brought over from Europe. In time, fish was to become an important staple of survival. George Simpson wrote in 1821 that "Whitefish is the Mainspring of our Existence".

But even the arrival of the "hardy" Orcadians did not bring an end to the complaints of illness and bodily weakness that had been a problem when workers were recruited among the poor of England. The Orcadians who arrived at the bay in ever-increasing numbers during the eighteenth century were, according to E.E. Rich, "Neither particularly healthy nor particularly active ..." They brought with them "the usual ailments of English and Scottish working men — stone, gravel, 'pains in the breast' and other bronchial troubles, gout, fevers and vapours, scorbutic disorders including scurvy, and the hernias, cancers and venereal diseases, frostbite and snowblindness which from time to time were reported".

The harsh weather encountered on Hudson Bay and later inland also took its toll in life and health, removing some of the bloom of romance from the old fur trade. Life was not always comfortable, even indoors. James Isham, who was in charge at Churchill in 1741, describes how his men used axes to hack away ice six or eight inches thick on the inside walls of the habitation. Bad enough indoors where open fires and stoves did little to take the chill off the air, it could be hazardous outdoors. Isham, in his narrative *Observations on Hudsons Bay* paints a grim picture of outdoor work at the edge of the frozen sea: "... itt's past beleif to think the Surprizing Effect the frost has in these parts, — I'have known men to stand at the saw for only 20 minuets when their face & hands has been froze so, they have been obligh'd to Retire to the Surgeon to have such Cur'd or Cutt off &c."

Under the circumstances, it is no wonder that many of the early traders — not to mention many of the later traders — turned to strong drink as a defence. Even liquor, however, was not always a comfort against the climate. Isham was astonished to discover that it was often necessary to thaw potables before using them to quench thirst or ward off the cold: "Beer, wine, brandy spirits &c. sett out in the ope'n air for three or four hour's, will freeze to Solid Ice, not only so, but have known by the Extreamity of the cold, a two gallon Botle of water to freeze solid by the stove side, in the housses we Dwell in, and can affirm that the spidle [spittle] has froze solid before half upon the ground from the mouth ..."

The undue consumption of liquor was a major problem at the bayside forts in the early years and although the Company made efforts to minimize the misuse of alcohol, it was not uniformly successful. The eighteenth was a hard-drinking century in any event, and the difficult and monotonous life on the bay made the forgetfulness induced by heavy drinking even more attractive. Brandy, wine and "bumbo", the notorious fur trade mixture of rum, water, sugar and nutmeg, proved to be the downfall of many who were unable to endure the hardships and rigours of the trader's life.

Insects also did what they could to tarnish the romantic aspects of a "man's life in the wilderness". The taciturn Samuel Hearne put up with them, commenting only that it was "almost impossible to sleep for the muskettoes". Others were more emphatic in their complaints. Glyndwr Williams, in his long essay *The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870* (*The Beaver*, Autumn 1983) records James Isham's assertion that there were mosquitoes whose bites made a man's head swell to the size of a barrel, that a bushel of mosquitoes was swept off a hunter emerging from the woods and that numerous insects had to be shovelled away from doorways before the men could get in.

All the comforts of the fur trade, circa 1785.

It was a hard life through all the years and it could be dangerous. Drowning took a heavy toll and the life of a boatman or Company labourer made physical demands that even hardy bodies could not always withstand. Men soon grew old. They were people like us, not giants, but they endured against tremendous difficulties and over long years they laid the foundation stones of a nation. A hard life is only "romantic" in retrospect. A nation is created and history made one difficult day at a time. ♦

—Christopher Dafoe

The summer of 1870 marked the end of an era for the Hudson's Bay Company. The Order in Council admitting Rupert's Land and the North-West Territory into the Dominion of Canada ended two centuries of Company rule. Effective 15 July 1870, the Company's status was reduced from that of a royally chartered British commercial company with judicial and administrative responsibilities to that of a private business operating under the regulations of Canadian law.

The nature of the Company's trading operations would alter significantly over ensuing decades. The lure of profits to be made from vast land holdings, received as part of the transfer payment (£300,000 and 7 million acres of land in the fertile belt), as well as opportunities for new commercial ventures, attracted many of its English shareholders. Opposing them were the traditional fur trade interests of the Company's Commissioned Officers, men responsible for the North American trade. The Company's ability to reconcile these divergent interests, during a period of social, economic and technological change, would be crucial in making a successful transition to a diversified commercial corporation.

The Company was now free to concentrate on the development of its resources and plot its future course. In November 1870, Governor Sir Stafford Northcote and the elected Committee of shareholders' representatives, collectively known as the Board, commissioned Cyril Graham, former private secretary to Lord Carnarvon during his tenure as British Colonial Secretary, to undertake an investigation of the Company's North American affairs as a first step in reorganization.

Recognizing that the relationship between the Company's London operations and its Commissioned Officers in the field was crucial to success, Graham recommended that the Board reconsider its opposition to the continuation of the Guarantee of 1865 which was scheduled to expire in 1869 and had been established by the Board to ensure a minimum annual income for Commissioned Officers to compensate for the inevitable fluctuations of the fur trade. No matter how distasteful an extension might be to its shareholders, the Company could not afford to alienate experienced men. This would cripple the fur trade and threaten any aspirations toward a general business. At the same time Graham proposed the addition of two more grades of service which would allow younger men greater scope for promotion and possibly attract better recruits.

The Company's outmoded transportation system was singled out as the major factor in its soaring operating expenses. Graham recommended the introduction of steam vessels on the Saskatchewan River, Lake Winnipegosis and Lake Manitoba, which could later be expanded to the Mackenzie, Slave and Peace Rivers. Although steamers might barely pay their way at first, Graham believed that the Company's image could only benefit from its taking the initiative in opening up the country and improving communications.

This was a factor not to be considered lightly. Anti-Company sentiment was chronic and widespread. The lengthy, semi-secret negotiations preceeding the surrender had been the source of much misunderstanding on the part of the general public. This was compounded by what was perceived to be HBC Governor William McTavish's passive role in the Red River uprising of 1869-70, which led many to conclude that the Company was implicated in the insurgents' cause. The Dominion government's argument that the Company's territories should have been ceded without payment of an indemnity was supported by a majority of Canadians, who feared that the final cash and land settlement would be a major component in the Company's continuing campaign to retard progress in the North-West. Finally, the Company's demands for 5 per cent interest on the £300,000 transfer settlement and the subsequent 1870 rebellion losses claims were seen as further evidence of greed on the part of what was considered to be an enormously wealthy organization.

Retail trade received little more than passing mention from Graham, reflecting both the Company's priorities and the current economic climate in the North-West. He noted that many Canadian businessmen were surprised that the Company had never taken advantage of its reputation and means to pursue an extensive general business in Canada. Although Graham predicted a good future in this area, banking appeared to be a more immediately tempting venture. He encouraged the Company to take steps in this area with the argument that if it were to move aggressively in these two sectors, it could regulate the commerce of the North-West.

The final section of the report dealt at much greater length with the land question, which was regarded by many shareholders to be the most likely, and in some cases the only, source of future profits. Graham recommended that, given the land's current low value and generally undetermined quality, if a buyer could be found to take the bulk of it at a good price the Company should seize the opportunity. Otherwise, he counselled a more cautious policy of holding back in areas likely to attract settlers and placing a minimum price on the remainder.

Opinion as to which direction the Company should take was mixed. The Commissioned Officers, not surprisingly, were unimpressed by shareholders' optimism regarding the Company's land holdings, even though fur trade prospects, at best, were gloomy. Profits from Outfit 68 (1 June 1869 — 31 May 1870) were the

The Honourable Company, 1870-1884

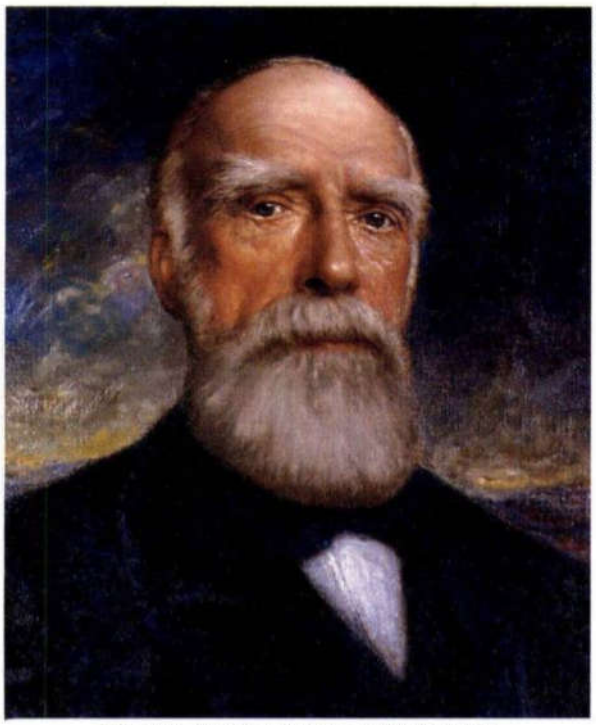
Twilight of the Fur Trade

By ELEANOR STARDOM

lowest in years. The situation appeared no better the following year when an actual loss was recorded. The Guarantee of 1865 had expired and, consequently, the officers received no remuneration. Seeing little future in the fur trade and with visions of more immediate profits to be made in land sales, an independent group of HBC shareholders tabled a report urging that it be abandoned. The Board countered with a recommendation to reorganize the fur trade, arguing that, despite the large capital outlay involved, it could be made both productive and remunerative. Controllable expense, they argued, not fur returns or prices, was the major culprit, and a reorganization of the transportation system, taking advantage of recent advances in railway and steamer technology, would enable them to make it economically viable.

The Company had much in its favour to recommend such a move. It had an established reputation for trading in quality goods, expertise, large resources and almost unlimited credit. Nothing could be done, however, without the consent of the Commissioned Officers. Their role within the Company was very different from that of an ordinary business in that they were not considered employees in the normal sense. They were not paid a salary nor could they be dismissed at will. They had legal rights outlined in the Deed Poll agreements of 1834 and were entitled to a share of the profits to a defined extent. Therefore their interests in the Company would have to be bought out before reorganization could proceed. Relations had been strained since the Company "went public" in 1863. The Commissioned Officers had not been consulted and were suspicious of the new management who had little knowledge of the fur trade and who appeared more interested in land settlement. Their resentment at having been excluded from a share of the £300,000 transfer fee, coupled with several years of inadequate or no remuneration, culminated in their sending Donald A. Smith, President of the Northern Council, to represent their settlement claims in the abrogation of the Deed Poll of 1834.

The new Deed Poll of 1871 proposed to establish a new group of officers which would attract men with much-needed commercial experience. The traditional



Hudson's Bay Company

Donald A. Smith's star rose rapidly after 1870.

interests of the Commissioned Officers would be bought out for the sum £107,055. Discussion at the two General Courts (meetings held in London) that summer was protracted and heated but finally an agreement was reached with the shareholders which was subsequently ratified by the Commissioned Officers.

While the Commissioned Officers had successfully used the threat of establishing a rival company to obtain their monetary demands, they were ultimately losers in the new agreement. Briefly, it provided for the addition of three new grades of officers who would share the traditional 40% of the profits from the fur trade as well as the general trade. They were, however, excluded from any share of the land revenues, although they were expected to assist with the management and disposal of land, if required. In addition, their portion of the profits was subdivided into one hundred shares instead of the former eighty-five, giving each officer a smaller share. The new result was fewer men with greater responsibilities. The Board still refused to consider any further provision for a guaranteed income, and assumed complete control of the fund set aside for the benefit of retired officers and their families. It claimed exclusive right to make promotions and appointments, which had previously been determined by seniority, thus opening the way for appointments from outside the ranks of the fur trade.

Under the terms of the new Deed Poll, a salaried position of Chief Commissioner was created which assumed authority formerly vested in the Governors and Councils of the various departments, which were now abolished. As the Company's chief representative in Canada, responsible for the annual trade, all Commissioned Officers were under his direct authority.

The man appointed to this position was Donald A. Smith. A native of Scotland, he had signed on with the Company as an apprentice clerk in 1838 and had spent the majority of the next twenty-nine years in Labrador. In 1851 he was promoted to the rank of Chief Trader. Ten years later he became a Chief Factor and, in 1869, was appointed to the charge of the Montreal Department. During his final years in Labrador he embarked on an investment career, acting on behalf of many of the Commissioned Officers, in conjunction with his cousin George Stephen, an entrepreneur and skilled investor who introduced Smith to other influential men such as E. H. King, manager of the Bank of Montreal, and shipowner Hugh Allan. Smith gained national prominence in 1870 as one of three Special Commissioners for the Canadian Government appointed to act as advisors after the Red River uprising. After Riel's escape, Smith became the chief civil authority in Rupert's Land until the arrival of Lieutenant Governor Adams G. Archibald. In July of 1870, the Company appointed Smith President of the Council of the Northern Department and it was in this capacity he had been authorized by the Commissioned Officers to represent their claims before the London Board for a share of the £300,000 transfer money.

His increasing influence was not confined to the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1870 he was appointed by Sir John A. Macdonald to sit on the first Council of the North-West Territories and later that year was elected to the first Provincial Assembly of Manitoba. The following year, he made a successful bid to represent the new constituency of Selkirk as an Independent in the Dominion Parliament. Thus, in the brief span of less than a decade, Smith had become firmly enmeshed in a national network of business and political interests. It was during this period that Smith conferred with Cyril Graham, who reported favourably on his rapport with the Commissioned Officers. Coupled with Smith's obvious capabilities, it was sufficient in Graham's eyes to recommend him for the position of the Company's chief representative in North America. As a result, he was appointed Commissioner in June 1871 and Chief Commissioner a year later.

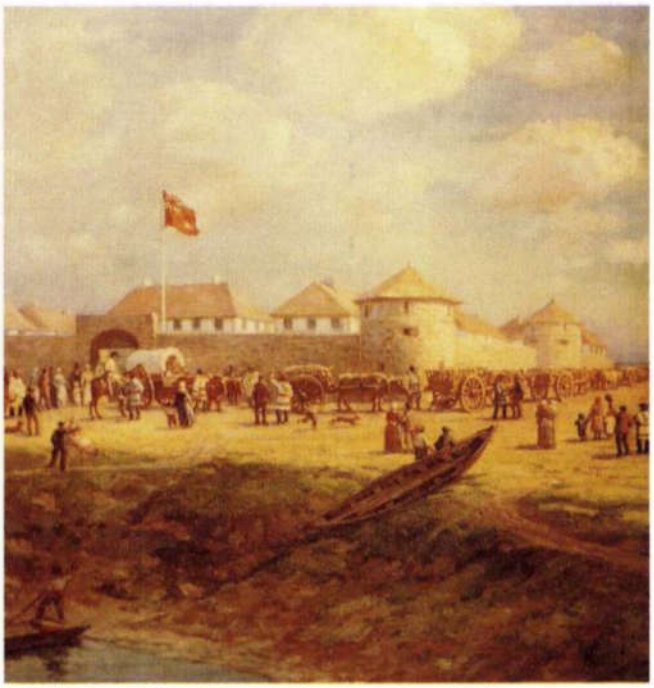
Smith's extensive background in the fur trade, combined with his business and financial expertise, suited him admirably for the task of spearheading Governor Northcote's campaign to revive the trade. Given the limited population in the North-West, major expansion of the general trade sector was not immediately feasible. Until surveys could be completed and the land could prove its worth, the fur trade would have to

provide the requisite operating revenue. Under Smith's local direction, the Company proceeded with its programme of reorganization and increased capital investment. The success of his efforts was reflected in the dramatic rise in net trading profits in 1872.

As Cyril Graham had noted in his report, transportation was the key to the efficient development of the Company's resources. At that time there were two major routes to the North-West. The Edmonton Trail, stretching overland from Fort Garry to Edmonton via forts Ellice, Carlton and Pitt, functioned as the main supply artery for a radiating network of cart trails serving northern posts. However, under the proposed new scheme, the traditional water route linking Red River, Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan River was destined to become the primary supply route for the Northern and Western Departments. This was the domain of the York boat brigades whose schedules were so meticulously synchronized that any unforeseen circumstance could result in a year's delay in an outfit reaching its destination. The only serious obstacle over its 1,100 mile length was Grand Rapids, near the juncture of Cedar Lake and Lake Winnipeg, where the Saskatchewan River dropped seventy feet in four miles. By the 1870s this system had reached capacity and could not be expanded to carry the expected volume of bulky freight required by developing settlements and government agencies. Consequently, the Company's first steamer, the *Chief Commissioner*, was launched on Lake Winnipeg in May 1872, followed the next year by a riverboat on the Saskatchewan. It was hoped that this move, combined with continued development of the American railway system and the promise of a Canadian transcontinental line, would enable the Company to realize faster returns on its capital investment.

Unfortunately, the Company's experiments in modern technology failed to live up to expectations. The *Chief Commissioner* proved unsuitable for navigation on Lake Winnipeg and was replaced by the *Colvile*. The riverboat was lost while attempting to ascend rapids near Cedar Lake and was replaced the following year by the *Northcote*, a sternwheeler built on the American model recommended by Graham.

While the Board assigned a relatively low priority to its land interests, Smith did take initial steps to implement a land sale policy. The tract with the best potential for immediate profit was the 500-acre Fort Garry Reserve. Initial sales were promising, but delay in obtaining land patents and the general depression, which struck both Europe and North America in 1873, resulted in a decline in speculative enthusiasm that did not revive until 1880. The effects of the slump were compounded by the fact that the Canadian Government, under the terms of the Dominion Lands Act, was granting free homesteads to settlers, rendering



Red River cart brigades were an important element in Company transportation before 1870. In this painting for the HBC by Adam Sherriff Scott the brigade is seen leaving Upper Fort Garry in 1863.

Hudson's Bay Company rural land holdings practically unsaleable.

Smith's tenure as Chief Commissioner was brief. Stubborn optimism regarding the potential of its urban tracts resulted in the Board's decision that the task of administering both the land and general trade was too burdensome for one man. Consequently, in 1874, Smith was appointed to the newly created position of Land Commissioner, reporting directly to London. Although he would no longer be involved with fur and general trade, he maintained his ties with the Commissioned Officers and clerks as their investment broker.

Smith's successor as Chief Commissioner was James A. Grahame, the former Sub-Commissioner who had been stationed in the Western Department of Victoria and the man, some Commissioned Officers felt, who should have been given the position of Chief Commissioner at the outset. He had joined the Hudson's Bay Company as an apprentice clerk at Fort Garry in 1843 and was transferred the following year to Fort Vancouver. He was promoted to Chief Trader in 1854 and to Chief Factor eight years later when he was transferred to the Norway House District. In April 1872 he was appointed to the position of Sub-Commissioner.

In one of his first letters to the new Chief Commissioner, Deputy-Governor Eden Colvile warned Grahame of the precarious nature of his position, espe-

"Fort Garry-Winnipeg-St. Boniface" a watercolour by J.R. Simpson, 1871. The settlement soon to become Winnipeg is seen between Fort Garry and the river. A Company steamer approaches the forks of the Red and the Assiniboine. The French-speaking community of St. Boniface lies on the far bank of the Red River.

Hudson's Bay Company Archives

cially regarding his future relations with Smith. While the Board had done all it could to prevent a clash of authority, Colvile cautioned that it would require considerable tact on his part to keep things working smoothly. "You have sole and supreme authority over all clerks and servants in the fur trade and you must put a stop to any interference with this authority on the part of D.A. Smith or anyone else. Avoid giving offence and with a person of D. Smith's temperament this will require tact and management". All future correspondence with the Dominion Government was to be directed through, or in concert with, Smith. Finally, in an attempt to avoid repeating past mistakes, he cautioned Grahame against any political interference. "We are now simply a trading corporation and wish to confine ourselves to our own business, cultivating the most friendly relations with those in authority but taking no side with one party or the other".

The beginning of Grahame's tenure coincided with that of a new Governor, George Goschen, and a catastrophic decline in fur prices. Committed to a policy of heavy capital investment in the fur trade, from which the Company could not withdraw without weakening its competitive edge over increasing numbers of free traders, Goschen considered the retention of vast land holdings to be a hazardous business venture. In 1874 a group of Canadian investors enquired into the possibility of the Company selling its land. However, when it became obvious that they wanted only a one year option, negotiations ceased. Private interest in its holdings was successfully used as an inducement to attract public interest and the next year the Canadian Government, urged by Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie, entered into negotiations with the Company for the purchase of the bulk of its land holdings. Negotiations and the depression dragged on, with the Company not wishing to appear "anxious sellers" and the Government refusing to commit itself. By 1876, worsening economic conditions made it inadvisable for the government to continue discussions and, with the return of the Macdonald government in 1878, the scheme was quietly forgotten.

Another of Goschen's plans to raise revenue resulted from the problems that the Company had experienced with the introduction of steamers. The increasing number operating in the Western and Northern Departments were vital to expanding both the Company's revenue and resources and, as such, it was imperative that they be protected. Consequently, he announced that the Company would embark on a Marine Insurance scheme which would be funded with money now being paid to outside interests and would prevent the recurrence of dividends lowered by uninsured losses. The scheme was only reluctantly approved by shareholders, but it was to provide a steady source of revenue over succeeding decades.

Grahame's experience in both the Northern and Western Departments made him much better qualified than his predecessor to oversee the reorganization of the Company's transportation system. Despite inital setbacks, progress was being made, altering traditional patterns which had evolved over the past century. In 1872, the Northern Pacific Railway reached Moorhead, Minnesota, and shortly thereafter it was announced that the bulk of Northern Department returns had been shipped by rail to New York, bypassing the historic Hudson Bay route. This signalled the end of York Factory's pre-eminence as a shipping and supply centre. It quickly declined to the status of a

simple trading post serving the immediate area and finally, in 1878, the Company's Northern Department headquarters were removed to upper Fort Garry. Company steamers, having established a regular route along the Assiniboine in 1875, pushed the jumping-off point for the cart brigades 230 miles west to Fort Ellice. Their utility was short lived, however, as the arrival of the railway finally ended long distance carting over the Edmonton trail.

Although the *Northcote*'s success on the Saskatchewan River and increased immigration to Manitoba were cited as positive signs, the spectre of economic depression still loomed large. The spring fur sale of 1877 only confirmed the downward trend as fur prices tumbled a further 30 per cent over the previous year which had registered a twenty year low. By autumn there was another decline of 20 per cent in finer furs, such as marten and mink, in which the Company specialized. The Board ordered reductions made to the fur tariff which set annual fur prices, but given the delay in communicating this information to the Commissioned Officers who purchased the furs, a considerable period of time elapsed before prices could be adjusted. Faced with a loss of £2,911, the Board declined to issue a dividend and again the Commissioned Officers received no remuneration for their efforts. At the same time, requisitions from the posts, which often had to be paid for two or three years in advance, were escalating to meet the demands of settlers, missionaries, government agencies and destitute Indians, as were Canadian duties on Company imports and general interest charges.

In an attempt to adapt to altered circumstances, the Board recommended changes to the 1871 Deed Poll which would increase the number of Junior Traders from eight to twenty-one. This would remedy a top heavy organization which made it increasingly difficult to get qualified people to fill the upper ranks. However, economic conditions demanded greater emphasis on operational economies rather than administrative reform. The Company was faced with two options: either raise additional capital from already disgruntled shareholders or make permanent restrictions in its overseas operations. After conferring with Grahame, the Board chose the latter course. Credit sales were curtailed and unproductive posts were closed.

HBC Chief Factors at Montreal, 1871. Donald A. Smith is seated directly to the left of the table.

Hudson's Bay Company Archives

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A garland of Hudson's Bay Company Commissioned Officers, 1872-1881. The three men in the central shield are (left to right) Donald A. Smith, James A. Grahame and Charles J. Brydges.

Cutbacks in transportation were not included, however, and reorganization continued apace. A new steamer, *Lily*, had been added in 1877 to service the upper portions of the Saskatchewan River between Carlton and Edmonton leaving the *Northcote* to ferry supplies and returns between Carlton and Grand Rapids. After years of consideration, the Board finally sanctioned the construction of a tramway to bypass the rapids at a proposed cost of £4,000. Further improvements were planned with the introduction of small river steamers on the Athabaska River and Lake Winnipeg in the hope that, by the following year, the trade would reflect the benefit.

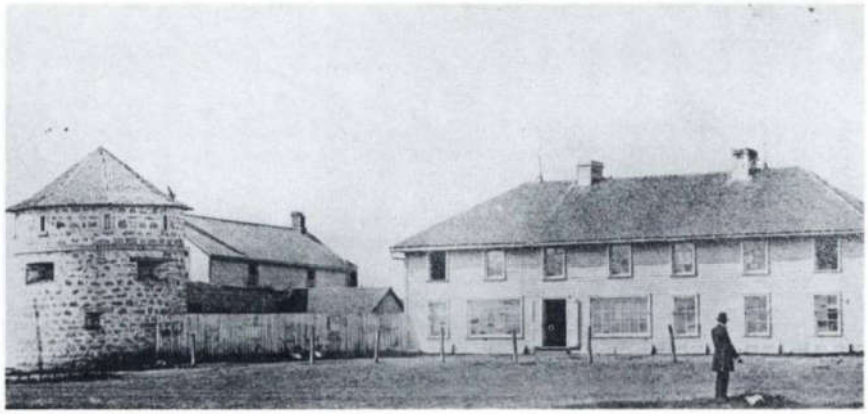
Unfortunately, the results of the 1878 Spring Sale were even more disastrous. In addition, low water on the Saskatchewan had prevented the use of the *Northcote* which had to be replaced with more costly cart brigades. These financial losses were compounded by the Manitoba Government's imposition of an education tax on land which was heavily weighted against non-residents.

By 1879, the trade appeared to have finally rallied; but by then the Commissioned Officers, after two years without remuneration, had taken matters into their own hands and mounted an aggressive campaign for a guaranteed minimum income. Two years earlier they had petitioned Grahame to intercede with the London Board and were successful in obtaining a temporary grant of £100 per share. This money was drawn from funds derived from Directors' salaries and undivided profits, augmented by a timely transfer of £13,000 from the Marine Insurance Fund. This failed to satisfy them and, under the leadership of Chief Factor John H. McTavish, the Fur Trade Party was formed. Using the threat of mass resignation, the officers sent McTavish and Donald A. Smith to present their demands to the Board. Although Grahame, as Chief Commissioner, would have seemed a more logical choice than Smith, there was widespread belief among the officers that Grahame had refused to take the initiative on their behalf in the past and a rift had developed between them.

Briefly, the Board acceded to all their demands with the exception of a permanent guarantee of £200 per share. Instead, they received a minimum of £150 per share for Outfits 77 to 81 inclusive which would be increased to £200 if fur trade profits exceeded £60,000. In addition, the remaining five unappropriated shares that had been applied to the retirement fund under the Deed Poll of 1871 would now be applied to the Commissioned Officers on the same basis as the other ninety-five. The satisfaction which was generally felt regarding the results of the negotiations was reflected in a letter of conciliation in which the Commissioned Officers reaffirmed their confidence in Grahame as their Chief Commissioner. Their contentment was illusory for, by 1879, the Board was promoting its general trade and land business to the detriment of the fur trade and the importance of the Commissioned Officers within the organization steadily declined.

The completion of the rail link between St. Paul and Winnipeg in 1878 made cheap transportation links to major metropolitan centres a reality. With the prospect of a Canadian transcontinental line, the Company was finally in a position to expand its general trade into areas that would become important service centres for agricultural and urban settlements. It was obvious that as immigration increased, changes would have to be made in the Company's general trade. Traditionally, the Commissioned Officers were natives of rural Scotland and although they had adapted well to the fur trade, they lacked any training in modern business methods and an appreciation for the needs of prairie agricultural and urban society.

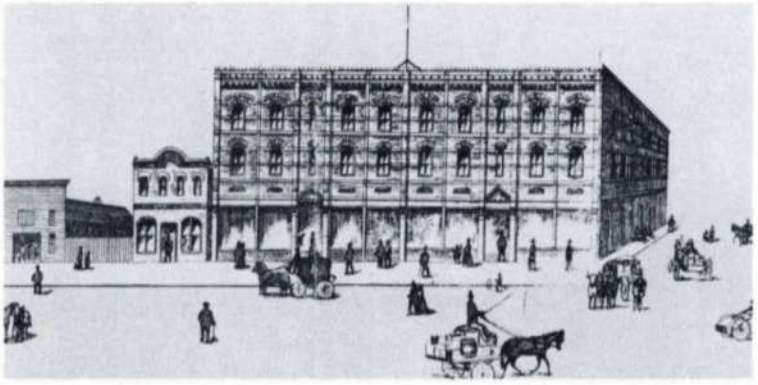
Anti-Company sentiment among the general public was again running high in response to what many believed to be Smith's speculative policy of not actively promoting land sales, preferring instead to wait until transportation improvements had increased values. As a result, Smith resigned in early 1879, ostensibly to



Hudson's Bay Company Archives

The HBC retail store at Upper Fort Garry, circa 1880. The Company would shortly open a modern department store on a nearby site. Within the decade the fort would be gone.

The new Hudson's Bay Company retail store and Fur Trade Department offices, Main Street, Winnipeg, 1881. Many old-time traders felt uncomfortable with the elegant new store.



Hudson's Bay Company Archives

spend more time on his private business concerns. However, frequent clashes of will between Smith and the more cautious Grahame, as well as Smith's weakening political influence, perhaps offer a more plausible explanation. Smith, his restless ambition frustrated by a depressed land market, often impinged on Grahame's authority in his eagerness to make large capital investments to secure lucrative government contracts and enhance land values. Such clashes demonstrated the need to resolve inevitable conflicts among the Company's senior officers in Canada. The Board took initial steps in this direction with the appointment of Charles Brydges, the former General Superintendent of Railways under the Mackenzie Government and political confidant of John A. Macdonald. Although his official title was Land Commissioner, his mandate was much broader as detailed by Board member Sir John Rose in a confidential letter to Macdonald:

> Brydges — although nominally Land Commissioner — will really be instructed to feel his way as expeditiously as he can, so as to master the whole business of the Company — not only as regards the Lands, but as regards the Fur Trade as well . . . Brydges is, in reality, the man who is to occupy the confidential relations and exercise all authority from this day forward.

Brydges' relations with Grahame were little better than Smith's had been. His suggestion that retail trade should be expanded to meet new demands and to attract settlers were opposed by Grahame, who preferred to be overcautious rather than incur heavy expense. After a reprimand from the Board, however, Grahame's attitude changed and he promised to push such enterprises with vigor. As a result, the Company proceeded to invest in new stores at Winnipeg, West Lynne and Portage la Prairie, where a recent influx of settlers had significantly altered the nature of the trade. Saw and grist mills were also constructed in suitable locations in hopes of encouraging settlement, as well as providing substantial savings on the cost and transportation of flour to distant posts. These actions fuelled fears on the part of many of the Commissioned Officers regarding the future of the Fur Trade.

Their fears were allayed somewhat by the election, in 1880, of a new Governor, Eden Colvile. Unlike his predecessors, who were noted more for their financial and political expertise, Colvile was familiar with the organization of the fur trade and had served for a brief period as resident Governor of Rupert's Land. Unlike Goschen, he had the good fortune to take office at the beginning of a brief but spectacular land boom in the North-West which was occasioned by the choice of

Winnipeg as the prairie focus of the transcontinental railway. Colvile immediately established cordial relations with the Commissioned Officers by touring the North-West that summer. Land and general trade issues were discussed and formed the basis of a favorable report at the November, 1880 General Court.

One of the highlights was the new Winnipeg store being constructed at York and Main Streets to replace the aging Upper Fort, no longer considered suitable for a modern urban-oriented business. The building was described, on completion, as the largest and most imposing building in Winnipeg although Grahame admitted to Board Secretary William Armit that he found it disquieting to consider a building's aesthetics as well as its utility. Four stories high, the store had steam elevators and a wide variety of departments including dry goods, groceries, carpets, dressmaking, millinery, wines and liquors. The front portion was reserved for retail business and the back and upper floors for storage of furs and general merchandise.

Brydges' aggressive campaign to expand the role of the Company steamers to accommodate government freight was also repugnant to Grahame, who remained firmly convinced that the Company's chief interest still lay in the fur trade. He argued that carrying outside freight would interfere with crucial fur trade shipments and that, given the uncertainty of water levels in the Saskatchewan River, failures would leave the Company open to costly damage claims for nonfulfillment of contracts. The Board upheld Brydges' argument that if the Company did not take the initiative in this area competitors would, but it also ordered him to work more closely with Grahame.

Therefore, by 1880, Company steamers were opened to public traffic and Brydges began to bid for government contracts. Competition, in the form of a rival line of steamers backed by Scottish capitalists, was a major concern, for it was feared that, if they were allowed to operate, they would corner public business and gain access to prime fur trade areas. Consequently, in 1881, the Board approved an amalgamation with the Winnipeg and Western Transportation Company in which the Company already had a minor interest. A second

Hudson's Bay Company Archives

C.J. Brydges had served as Managing Director of the Grand Trunk Railway before joining the HBC.

HBC steamer "Colvile" at Lower Fort Garry on the Red River in 1877. The floating dock is the hull of the "Chief Commissioner" built at the Lower Fort in 1872.

Geological Survey of Canada

Hudson's Bay Company Archives

The Hudson's Bay Company retail store, Vancouver, which opened in 1887.

agreement was reached with the other major rival, the North West Navigation Company, whereby the latter assumed control of all shipping on Lake Winnipeg and the Winnipeg and Western Transportation Company retained the monopoly on the Saskatchewan River. Traffic on the Assiniboine River was to be evenly shared.

These negotiations were based on the assumption that the Canadian government would take steps to improve navigation on the Saskatchewan. Accustomed to massive government railway subsidies as General Superintendent of Railways, Brydges did not hesitate to approach the Dominion Government for funds to dredge some of the more troublesome areas. Such support was crucial to the system's reliability and its ability to compete with the CPR. The government, however, was more concerned with railway construction and by the time the work was approved it was too little too late. By 1883, when the prairie section of the railway was completed, steamboats had been largely eclipsed, although they remained an important feeder service north from the railhead.

In anticipation of the end of the agreement for a guaranteed remuneration in 1882, the Commissioned Officers made a representation to the Board, which was supported by Donald A. Smith, to have the Guarantee extended for an additional three years. Their request was approved without the usual debate by shareholders appeased by a capital return of £2 per share accruing from land sales. These gains were counterbalanced, however, by a further erosion of the Commissioned Officers' power within the corporate structure. The Board altered the clause in the resolution passed in 1879 which entitled Inspecting Chief Factors and Chief Factors to recommend officers for appointment. By the terms of the new agreement, these recommendations were to be restricted to appointments within the fur trade "exclusive of that branch of the business in settled and partially settled Districts in which the general trade predominates".

Brydges' fortunes waned with the collapse of the land boom in the spring of 1882. The Board, becoming increasingly alarmed at the amount of capital expenditure involved in his plans for expansion, shelved his

"Donald Smith and Louis Riel at Fort Garry, 1870", painted for the Hudson's Bay Company by Bruce Johnson. The painting shows part of the crowd of 1,000 that assembled on 19 January to hear Smith explain his mission from Canadian Prime Minister John A. Macdonald.

broad mandate and reverted to their original policy of a distinct separation between the land and trade departments. Grahame was now totally responsible for fur and general trade matters and careful research was to be undertaken before any recommendations for further expansion were made.

Complaints had reached the Board implicating Brydges and Grahame in questionable dealings in Company land. As a result, Deputy Governor Sir John Rose visited Canada with Secretary Armit and Board member Sandford Fleming to investigate the allegations and to assess the Company's operations. Fleming, former Engineer-in-Chief and Superintendent of Surveys for the CPR, and Brydges had a long history of rivalry as railway advisors to the Dominion Government. In his report, Rose concluded that the general trade could not remain viable under existing conditions. Upon visiting towns along the CPR, he noted the thriving business being conducted by independent traders from the United States and eastern Canada. Operating out of tents which could be easily moved to keep pace with construction, they carried a wide range of goods and had access by telegraph to suppliers in Winnipeg, St. Paul and Chicago who could fill orders within two days. He contrasted this situation with the Company's post at Qu'Appelle which he considered a fair representation:

> The English goods had only arrived on the first week in July. The Canadian goods ordered the previous year had actually not come to hand at the date of our visit but were expected in carts from Fort Ellice. Many of the goods sent from England on requisitions prepared the previous year were unsuitable and a great demand existed for articles that had either not been ordered at all, or in insufficient quantities; some of them, such as potted meats, &c., having actually been procured from passing traders. When they run short at the store they have first to send a requisition by what is called express to the officer in charge of the district, at Fort Ellice (some 140 miles off). This, after it is examined and approved of there (which I am told takes some time), is forwarded by the usual cross-country road to Mr. Graham [*sic*] in Winnipeg. The same process recurs there, and he sends the order perhaps to Montreal, St. Paul, Chicago or England. Many months elapse before the article — which the independent trader would in the meantime have turned over two or three times — arrives.

Rose felt that there were few officers, from the Chief Commissioner on down, who were competent to act as traders even if the Board did concede the power to act independently. Instead, the Company needed an efficient businessman at the head of its trading operations.

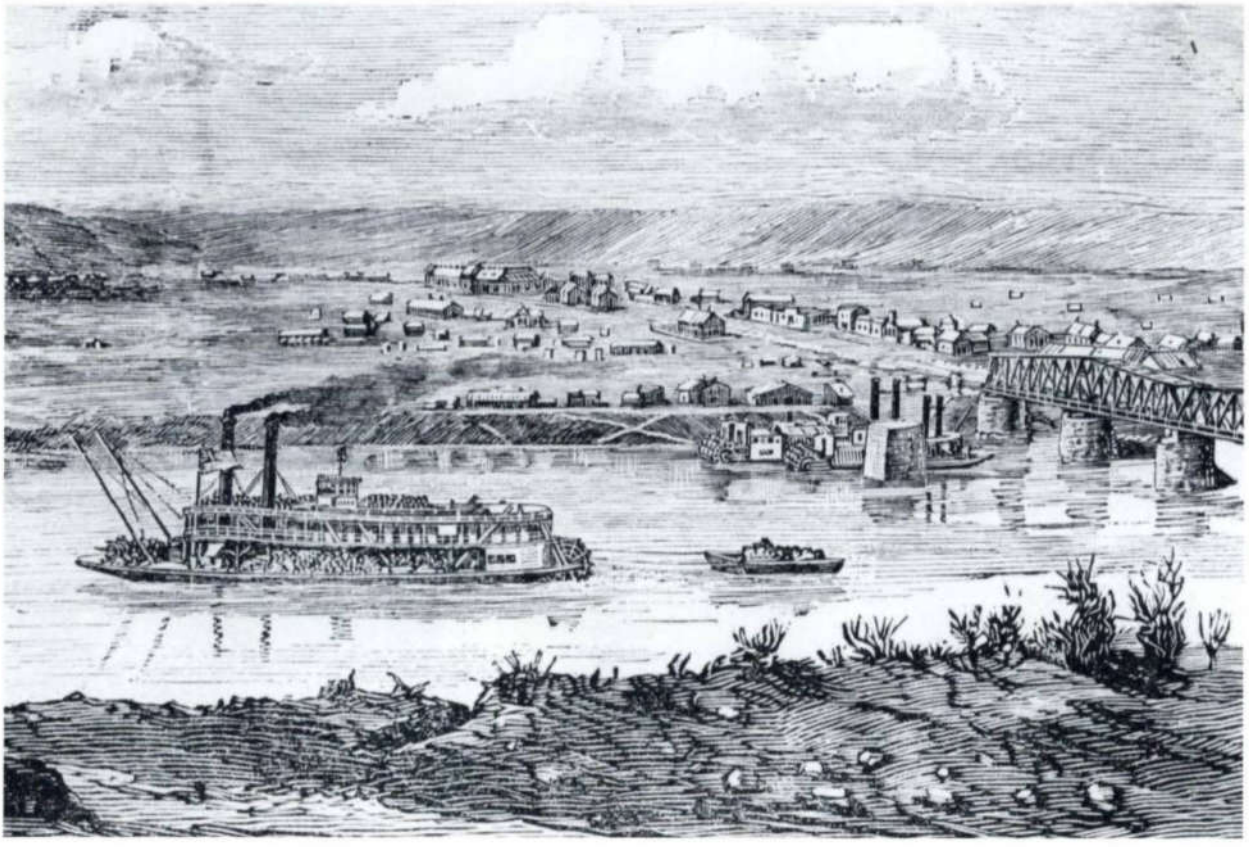
While he acknowledged that the Company's prestige and reputation were widely recognized, he questioned if it had the wherewithal to turn this asset to account. In his opinion, it had two options: to confine itself to a wholesale general dealership at Winnipeg or to restrict itself to a small number of the best places where it could secure competent managers and avoid offending the Commissioned Officers. Either option would require a strict and efficient head at Winnipeg, and although Grahame was "a thoroughly trustworthy and upright man, deserving every consideration at our hands for his long and faithful services . . . he has not the qualities fitting him for the new and varied duties that must be undertaken if we are to carry on an active commercial business."

He also recommended that the Company dispose of its interest in bridges and in the Winnipeg flour mill which was in need of costly modernization after six years of operation. As soon as the railway was established, he recommended that a similar policy be applied to the Company's steamers.

He absolved Brydges of any wrongdoing in the controversial purchase of the Old Fort by Grahame, Sedley Blanchard, the Company's local solicitor, and another Company officer, who had planned to hold it for speculative purposes. Grahame was not so fortunate. In March, 1883, Governor Colvile requested that he tender his resignation, stating that the Board recognized that a younger and more active man was needed to run the business. Grahame complied immediately but the Board chose not to accept his resignation, stating that they were unwilling to terminate his long service so abruptly. Instead, they preferred that he continue in his position until his retirement could take place "at a time and a manner that would be agreeable to yourself and the Committee". This decision placed Grahame in the unenviable position of having to maintain a façade, knowing that he did not have the Board's full support or confidence and that he could be dismissed at any time. In the meantime, the Board had effectively ensured his cooperation while they sought a successor. As a parting shot, Colvile informed Grahame that Secretary Armit would be returning to Canada to carry out arrangements for the future conduct of the business. As a result of Armit's recommendations, T. R. Smith, the Assistant Secretary, was appointed to take temporary charge of the Company's general trade.

Although Rose was a powerful ally, attacks on Brydges persisted from new quarters. At a meeting of

The HBC steamer "Northcote" on the South Saskatchewan River at Medicine Hat in 1887.



Glenbow Foundation

the General Court in November 1883 to elect a new member to the Board, Donald A. Smith voiced other shareholders' concerns regarding local management of both the land and commercial departments. He stated that land dealings at Fort Garry were not made in the Company's best interests and showed a lack of judgement which, in his opinion, called for an alternative form of supervision in Canada than that which currently existed. Insufficient money was being obtained for lots, especially those nearest the railway, and he described the conduct of the commercial business in Canada as "not such as would recommend itself to gentlemen concerned with commerce in England". Although he was aware that the Board had recently looked into these complaints, he called for a more thorough investigation which, in turn, was rejected by the Board.

The election of officers then took place and when the ballots were counted, it was discovered that Smith had staged a brilliant coup. Since there were no provisions in the Charter for voting by proxy, Smith had used his position as the major shareholder to nominate his own list of directors, which included himself. As his shares outnumbered those in support of the House List, the Board decided to negotiate rather than risk a legal dispute. The result was an arrangement whereby Smith and one of his nominees, Charles Russell, were given seats on the Board at a special General Court the following month; and Smith and Sandford Fleming were requested to investigate the former's allegations concerning the Company's Canadian operations. This was formalized 1 May 1884 with the formation of the two-member Canadian Subcommittee. Copies of all correspondence between North America and London, including the sale and disposition of lands, were to be submitted to the subcommittee and they were to approve all purchases of goods in North America. Satisfied that these actions would answer any complaints, the Board ordered that any further enquiries into questionable land transactions be halted.

Having established a new administrative structure, the Board set out in earnest to find a replacement for Chief Commissioner Grahame. His resignation, which had been tendered in April 1883 was formally accepted in June 1884 when he was informed of the appointment of Joseph Wrigley, an English businessman with no previous connections to the Company or the fur trade, to the new position of Trade Commissioner.

This appointment reflected the general trend, which the Company had followed over the past decade, towards a salaried system and away from the appointment of men to upper management positions from within the ranks of the fur trade. Although the Board's choice was met with disapproval from many of the "old guard" among the Commissioned Officers, it was widely recognized that the Company needed an infusion of new blood if it was to capitalize on the general trade.

By choosing to look ouside the Company for a man with broad commercial experience to oversee its fur and general trade, the Company entered the final phase of its transition from a fur trade company to a diversified corporation, a process which had been evolving since 1870. Much had been accomplished in fourteen years, despite economic setbacks in every area of its operations. Transportation systems had been upgraded to take advantage of technological advances and the administrative structure had been streamlined. Initial steps had been taken to develop its land and commercial interests. At the same time the fur trade remained a viable part of the Company's operations, its revenues providing a base from which it could diversify. The soul-searching over which direction the Company should take, exacerbated by divergent interests of English shareholders and Canadian-based Commissioned Officers, would have been less urgent if the economic climate under which the Company operated had remained static. However, the completion of the transcontinental railway, attracting new markets and competition, left little latitude for error or experimentation.

Despite these problems, commitment to the Company's Canadian operations remained strong. It would remain to the new Commissioner to overcome the Commissioned Officers' distrust and carry on the reorganization of the Company's general trade on a more profitable basis, while at the same time maintaining the fur trade and transportation system on which the entire operation, for the time being, depended. ♦

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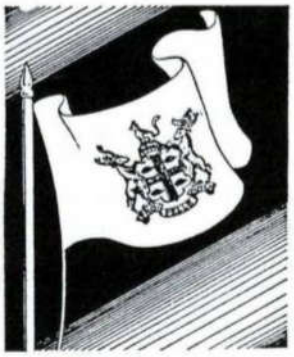


George Goulding, Pedestrian

Wobble to Glory

By Glynn A. Leyshon

George Goulding was a champion in every sense of the word, but what made him unique was his medium. He was a race walker, a "wobble-walker". It is astounding in this day and age to think that a heel-and-toe artist, a pedestrian, a purveyor of undulating hips, flailing elbows and hyperextended knees could be labelled "the Sensation of the Athletic Year", and be the feature attraction, indeed in some cases, the only attraction, at meets with 20,000 spectators from the Caledonian Games of Lucknow, Ontario to the Millrose Games in Madison Square Gardens, New York. In the course of a ten-year career, Goulding amassed 97 wins and an Olympic gold medal in 103 walking races for a 94% average, but even his losses were unusual.

Goulding became so good at his sport that one race committee barred him and others handicapped him. For most of his career he was forced to stand at the start, or "scratch" line and watch while various pedestrians, some champions in their own countries, were sent off at intervals with headstarts of as great as 40 seconds or 125 yards in a two-mile race. Invariably, Goulding reeled them in one by one to ovations from the crowd. One race in Buffalo in which he set a new world record for the mile in 6:28 was described as follows:

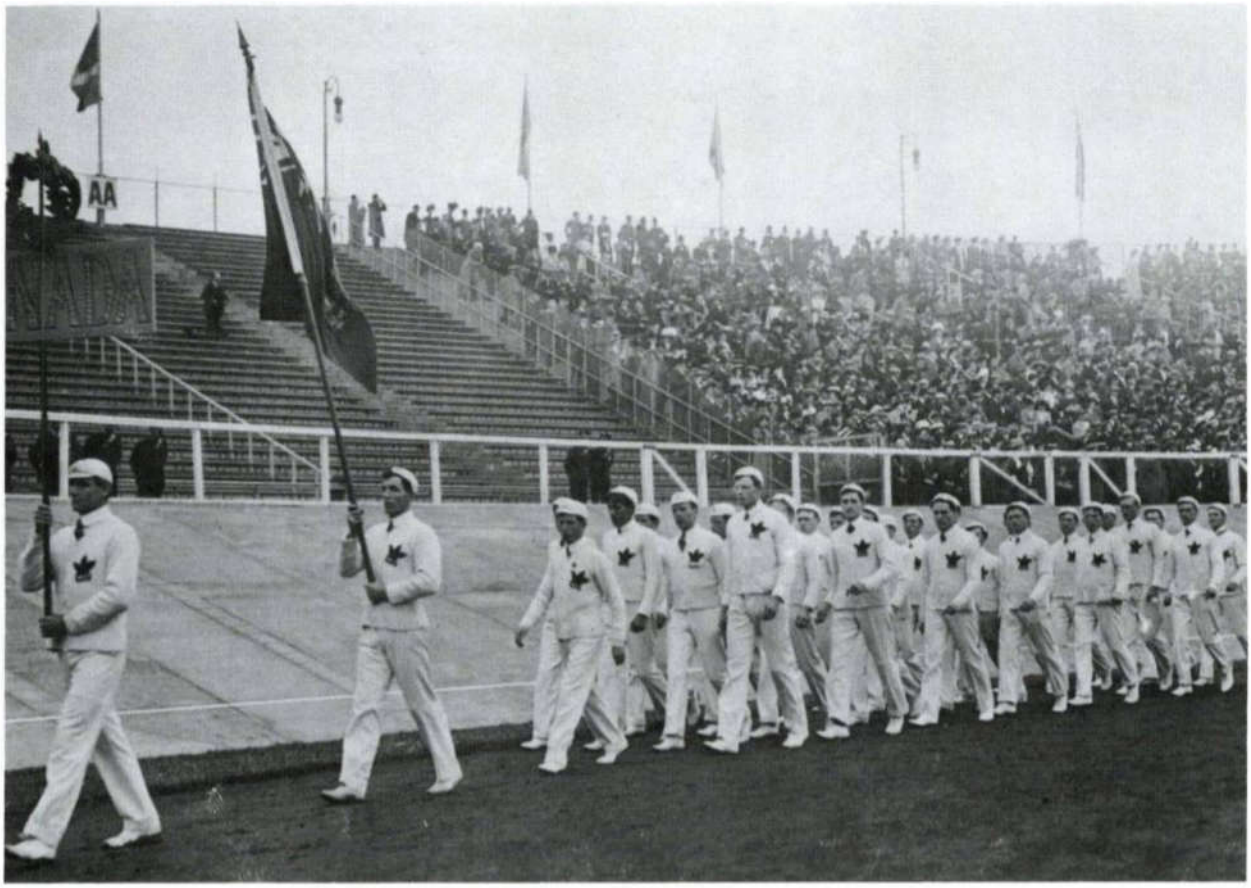
> Halfway around on the third lap he caught the first man and the military band played "The Maple Leaf Forever" as he hustled after the rest. As he passed the last man, the band played "God Save the King." He was given one of the biggest receptions ever accorded an athlete in Buffalo.

His few losses were caused by overzealous handicappers who were anxious to push Goulding to new records and excite the enthusiastic crowds with close races. On occasion they miscalculated, and although Goulding's time was better than the winner's, he was listed as second or third place. In the strictest interpretation of events, one could say that he did not lose more than a handful of domestic or international races over a 10-year period. A loss against the American champion, Renz, whom he had beaten on several occasions before, was typical of the very few defeats Goulding endured. Eddie Renz was given a one-lap head start in an eight-lap, two-mile race. There were a half-dozen others in the race, all of whom Goulding passed. On the last lap he went into his famous sprint with the crowd urging him on, but he hit the curb and fell. He jumped to his feet but was unable to catch Renz who finished in 14:7 4/5. Goulding's time was 13:50 2/5.

Born in Hull, England, Goulding came to Canada as a teenager to seek his fortune. He was a lithe 5'10" (1.75m), 135 lbs. (64 kg.) at his prime and he began his athletic career as a marathon runner. He represented Canada in the 1908 Olympic Games in London, England in both the 3,500 metre walk where he finished fourth, and the marathon where he finished 22nd. It was in the 1908 Olympic year, while training with a friend, that he was persuaded to try race walking. It was a fortuitous confluence of forces and abilities. Almost from the beginning, Goulding was successful. In contrast to many of his adversaries, he had a smooth and flowing style which was admired throughout his career.

Race walking demands a concentration on form that other races do not require. To be found guilty of "lifting" is to forfeit the race. The rules require that one foot be in contact with the ground at all times. If both are off the ground this is considered "lifting" and turns walking into running. Great were the controversies this engendered in racing competition. Judges would throw themselves prostrate beside the track clutching newspapers held at mid-calf height so that they could better ascertain if a man was lifting. Were he so judged, he was ejected with no appeal or defence allowed. Many were the big names such as Webb and Larner who were disqualified for "lifting". It never happened to Goulding.

After the 1908 Olympics, Goulding forsook running entirely and concentrated on race walking. In 1909 he entered 19 major walking competitions, winning 18 of them. Several were handicap events including the single race he did not win (he was second) and one was against a relay of four men. All of these races were



The Canadian team in procession, 1908 Olympic Games, London, England.

in Canada, but his exploits, which included the one and the three-mile Canadian championships, were attracting attention in the U.S. In 1910 he began racing in Buffalo, New York. On 28 February 1910 Goulding broke the U.S. record for the mile which had stood for more than 25 years. The old mark of 6:29 3/5 had been set in 1883 and Goulding, giving away as much as 300 yards in handicaps, breezed by 10 others to win in 6:29 1/5. It was the start of a tempestuous, exciting, and emotional connection that would include not only accolades and glowing praise, but accusations of "professionalism" and petulant shows of jealousy. Throughout it all, Goulding displayed the equanimity of the model Y.M.C.A. member that he was. Polite to a fault, always a gentleman, he displayed a remarkable sense of sportsmanship while still possessing a fierce sense of competition.

In June of 1910 Goulding smashed the world record in the mile with a time of 6:24 4/5. He performed this feat at Hanlan's Point in Toronto at a meet sponsored by the T. Eaton Company. The crowd of 13,500 warmed to the modest world champion and those behind the scenes began to plan a match race with E.J. Webb of England. Webb had defeated Goulding in the 1908 Olympics and was listed as "world champion". By August of that year the match races were set. There would be both a one and a three-mile race. Who paid the costs of Webb's travel and accommodation is not known, but he stayed in Toronto for several months.

The Toronto papers took a keen interest in the event. There were comments comparing the individual styles of the athletes, their records and times, and even a "tale of the tape" listing seven measurements plus respective ages. One comment on the contrasting styles noted that Webb was rough and awkward while "Goulding wouldn't walk unfairly for the clock on City Hall tower and the mayor's chair thrown in." One downtown Toronto store, Mack's, had a blown up photo of the two, which was nearly lifesize, placed in the window.

Goulding won both these match races and after the three-mile event the spectators rushed onto the field and carried Goulding on their shoulders the length of the grandstand to deafening cheers. Over 20,000 people came to witness the event — and the walking race was the only item on the card. The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada was displeased with the idea of a match

race, perhaps because of its exclusivity, so they passed a regulation shortly after this event banning match races. They would only allow the race to be an "open" event. Subsequently, the Eaton Athletic Association imported another English champion for a second series of match races with Goulding and the organizers simply included a half-dozen "sparring partners" to fulfill the letter of the Amateur Athletic Union law.

After the race with Webb, Goulding was called "world champion", but he declined the appellation at a banquet in Toronto given in his honour. He stated modestly that the Olympics were for deciding world champions and he would wait for them to decide.

In early 1911 he was racing in New York. The newspapers were enthusiastic about him: "His form was superb and his walking the fairest seen in a blue moon", wrote one sports reporter.

So great was the enthusiasm for pedestrianism that it was reported that clubs were being formed to revive walking and efforts were being made to have the popular Canadian participate. One paper stated "walking has been a dead issue for years, but has taken a new lease on life with Goulding. He has revolutionized the sport in the U.S." The secretary of the Amateur Athletic Union of America, James Sullivan, was prepared to invite Goulding to compete in New York in a one mile handicap event, and members of the New York Athletic Club offered Goulding a job if he would relocate in New York and carry the club's colours. The Canadian declined. Later in 1911 in Brooklyn, N.Y., Goulding broke the world record in the two-mile event and received a great ovation. He was strengthening his association with fame and glory as well as becoming a darling of the sporting public.

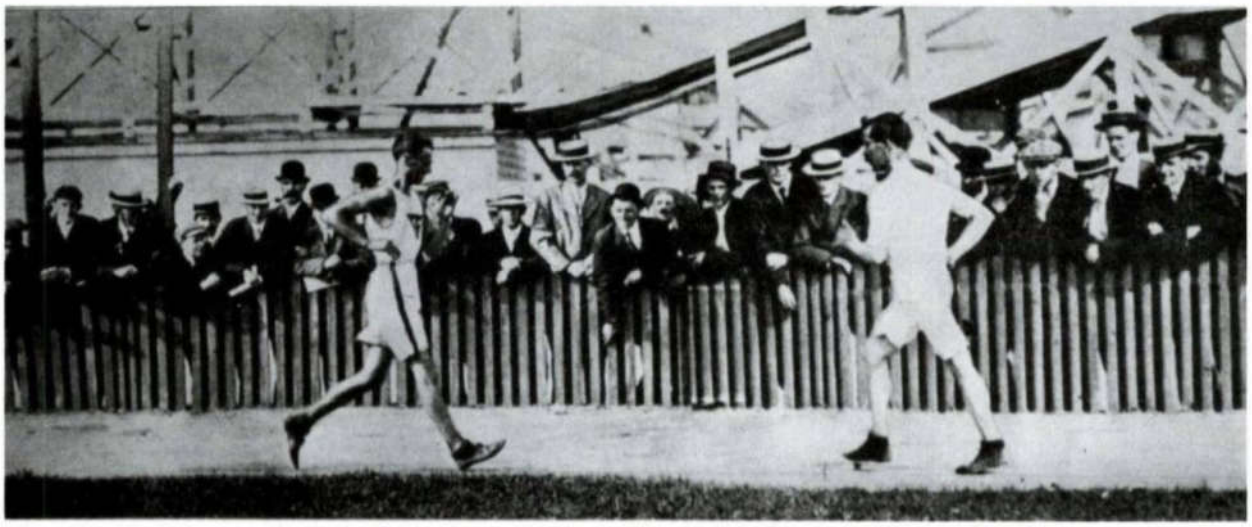
There are several stories that graphically outline how upright, virtuous and sportsmanlike George Goulding was. Once, while travelling to New York by train, a chance companion packed a bottle of whisky in Goulding's bag to avoid customs officials. When he discovered it later, the champion gave it to a race official since he, himself, "never touched liquor."

In 1911 the Toronto *Globe* printed the following editorial:

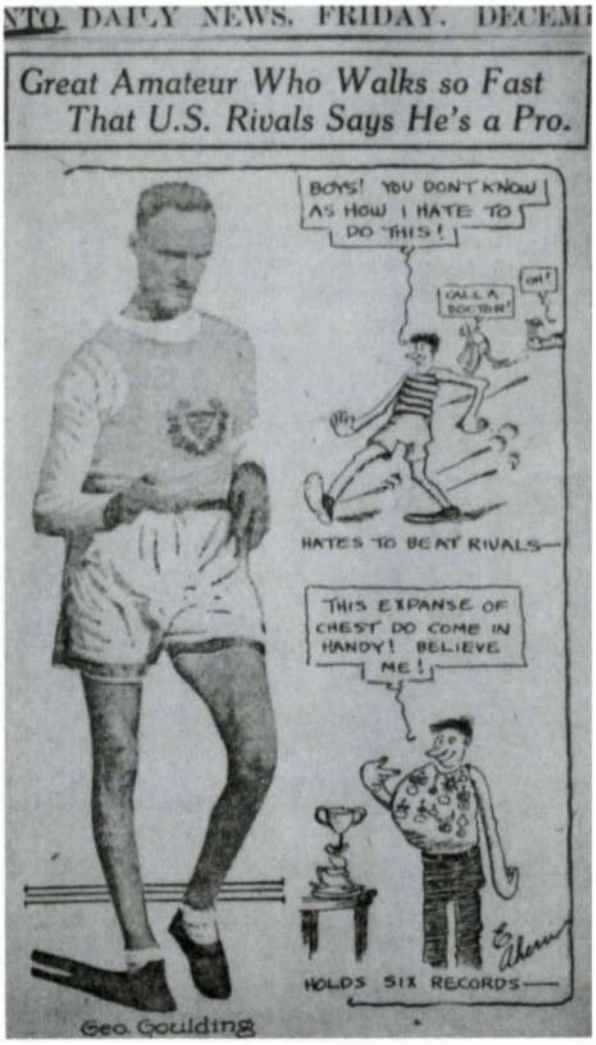
> Caledonian Day has come and gone leaving no ill flavour behind it. The roughness, the brutality which sometimes characterized athletic meets in Canada thirty or forty years ago was entirely absent, and in its stead prevailed a quietness, a respect for law and order as conspicuous as it was gratifying. In nothing was the difference between the old and the new more clearly revealed than in the character of the attendant athletes. Some of the professionals of an older generation were men whose manners and morals left much to be desired. But those who were in Lucknow were, some of them, the very flower of Canadian manhood — quiet, intelligent, self-respecting fel-

E.J. Webb of England and George Goulding prepare for their match race, Toronto, 1910.

George Goulding (left) and G.E. Larner, Toronto 1911. "I saw Larner walk Saturday and cannot find any fault with his gait", said Goulding in response to suggestions that Larner was a "lifter".



Above: "Goulding's Sportsmanlike Act" said a headline over this Toronto "Star Weekly" photo. Larner had stopped in order to protest what he regarded as undue monitoring by race officials. Goulding walked back so that the rivals could start on even terms again. Below: A Toronto "Star" cartoonist comments of Goulding's prowess, 1915.


TO DAILY NEWS. FRIDAY. DECEMI
Great Amateur Who Walks so Fast That U.S. Rivals Says He's a Pro.
BOYS! YOU DON'T KNOW AS HOW I HATE TO DO THIS!
CALL A DOCTOR!
oh!
HATES TO BEAT RIVALS—
THIS EXPANSE OF CHEST DO COME IN HANDY! BELIEVE ME!
HOLDS SIX RECORDS—
Geo. Goulding

lows whose muscles were supplementary to the mind, not developed at its expense. George Goulding the champion walker of the world is prominent in church work in Toronto. . .

Perhaps his greatest exhibition of sportsmanlike behaviour came during a second series of match races with another English champion, George Larner, who was a 1908 Olympic gold medal winner. Larner was brought over from England about one month before the competition and to fulfill the A.A.U. requirements other walkers were invited to compete. Larner, whose mile record had been broken by Goulding, still held most of the records for distances up to 10 miles but some experts had accused him of "lifting". Goulding, however, refused to be drawn into the controversy and stated "I saw Larner walk Saturday and cannot find any fault with his gait."

Despite the fact that the only major attraction at the match race would be Goulding versus Larner, the tickets were sold in a rush. There were 28 events on the card, including a whippet race, but all the newspaper space was devoted to the Larner-Goulding contest.

Most newspapers predicted a Goulding victory and they trumpeted the result with headlines when he did, indeed, cross the finish line 30 yards in front. Larner congratulated Goulding: "You're a wonder. Magnificent." At this stage, Goulding had been walking competitively for only three years.

After the one-mile race Goulding was "chaired" by the crowd and given a thunderous ovation. The post race analysis had many questioning Larner's style, but plans for a three-mile challenge had already been made.

In the three-mile race held two weeks later Goulding

broke the record for the distance and gave a new example of his sportsmanship. At the start of the race there was some confusion. Instead of a gun the walkers were simply given the word to go. Goulding immediately opened up a 10 yard lead. The crowd became upset and an unprecedented thing happened. They booed the famous sportsman. Goulding was unaware that anything amiss had occurred. Meanwhile the officials were scrutinizing Larner so closely for lifting that it bordered on harassment. Larner slowed and stopped. Goulding who was 30 yards in front saw this, turned and walked back to his opponent and persuaded him to continue the race. Other entrants passed them in the interval but Goulding simply extended himself to leave Larner behind and pass everyone else as well. He finished 100 yards ahead of his rival.

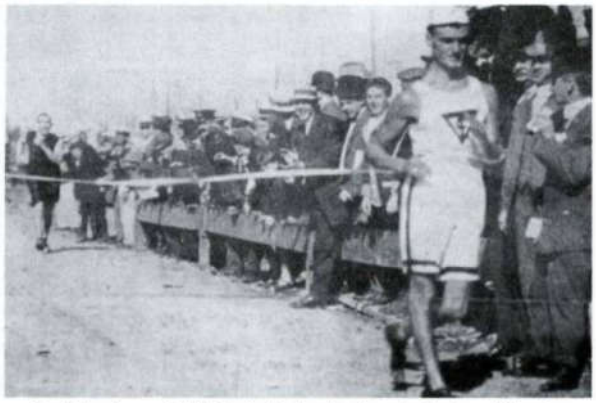
By 1912, Goulding's star was high. Invitations to compete flooded into Toronto. Interest was heightened, perhaps, by the prospect of the forthcoming Olympic Games. Goulding was a man in demand. As one paper expressed it:

> Goulding, the sensation of the athletic year, revives the heel and toe game. He is the first walker in recollection who has been able to arouse genuine enthusiasm at the athletic meets. The demonstration accorded him at the NYAC games in Madison Square Gardens was the most remarkable ever seen. Despite a 200 yard handicap, he won the race by 40 yards. He has received offers to appear in eight meets in New York, but has accepted only the 23rd Regiment invitation. The appearance of the sensational Canadian walker will be the feature of the Brooklyn indoor season.

At the 23rd Regiment Games Goulding raced against a relay team of four men, one of whom, Ben Schwartz, would become his lifelong friend. The distance was four miles and Goulding not only shattered the 25-year-old record for the distance, but set 11 other American records in the process and crossed the finish line 100 yards in front of his nearest opponent.

The 1912 Olympic Games were almost an anticlimax for George Goulding. He easily won his heat in the 10,000 walk and in the final jumped into an early lead over his old rival, E.J. Webb. During the course of the race three of the seven contestants were disqualified for "lifting" so Goulding proceeded very carefully indeed and won by 80 yards in a time of 46:28.4. This record stood until 1948.

A race official checks for "lifting" as E.J. Webb (left) and Goulding round the track shoulder to shoulder, 1912 Olympics, Stockholm.



Goulding leaves Webb far behind as he breasts the tape, Toronto, 1910.

After his Olympic victory, the taciturn Canadian sent a telegram to his wife, newly delivered of a son. The telegram read, "Won George." By agreement, his wife did not name their new child until George's return. The boy was named George Beverly Olympic Goulding.

He returned to Toronto in triumph. People lined the streets seven deep along the parade route from the station to the flag-bedecked city hall. More than 50 banner-draped automobiles bearing civic officials and representatives of various sports clubs made up the parade. Goulding was "chaired" up the city hall steps while the Toronto City Band played Handel's "Hail the Conquering Hero Comes". A monogrammed set of silver consisting of 110 pieces, was presented to Goulding by the city. It was inscribed:

> Presented to George H. Goulding by the Corporation of the City of Toronto on his return from the Olympic Games held in Sweden, where he won the walking championship of the world, 1912.

Actually, the arrival was staged. Goulding had come home the day before, but civic officials had prepared everything ahead of time. Not wanting to disappoint the fans, they put Goulding on a train and had him arrive at the station at the announced time on the announced day.

At this point he indicated he would retire. He did not compete at all in 1913, but returned to the circuit in 1914.

In January of 1915 Goulding set a new world record in the three-mile event at the 74th Regiment games in Buffalo. Walking against a three man relay, he set a time of 20:42 4/5, a better than seven minute mile pace, to win by an astonishing two lap margin.

At this time, various regiments sponsoring meets in New York state began turning the proceeds over to pay the mortgages of people whose homes were threatened with foreclosure. Goulding was the feature attraction at several of these. In October of 1915, however, the love affair came to an end. In the U.S. seven mile championship, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, Goulding dazzled the sporting world by winning the race and establishing a new world record. It was another triumph to pile atop his grand pyramid of triumphs. Or so it seemed.

333
SECOND
MONSTER ATHLETIC CARNIVA
Featuring, GEORGE H. GOULDING of Canada
World's Champion Walker
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
SAVE-A-HOME FUND
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
Evening Mail, Co. K, 71st Reg,t and A. A. U
TO BE HELD AT
71st Regiment Armory, 33rd and 34th Streets, Bet. Park and Lexington Av
New York City
Thursday Eve., Jan. 20, 1916, at 8 P. M.
ADMISSION 50 CENTS
DANCING AFTER THE GAM
Chas. Albert Press, N. Y.

Goulding and Percy MacDonald, both of the Central YMCA, Toronto, 1909.

William Perry, a member of the Registration Committee of the Amateur Athletic Union resigned from the committee in protest over Goulding's victory, accusing him of "professionalism". Parry claimed that he had documentary evidence that Goulding was "not in the walking game for his health." Furthermore, he charged that the president of his own committee had used undue influence on Goulding to persuade him to come to the U.S. and take the title away from an American, Eddie Renz. It is worth noting that the president of the committee against whom Parry was railing was Goulding's friend Sam Schwartz. Parry was a close friend of Eddie Renz. Parry admitted that he acted out of loyalty to his friend and that he had no personal feeling against Goulding whom he regarded as "the greatest walker the world has ever seen or ever will see." He could not, however, condone an action to annex a title that he felt should remain in the U.S.A.

The press soon became involved in the dispute. The New York *Sun* quoted the meet manager as saying Goulding received the same expenses as those competitors from New York — $1.55 train fare. An editorial commented: "Forty-nine out of fifty amateur athlete investigations have sordid motives behind them. Just one in 50 are started for the purpose of purifying amateur athletics."

Goulding wrote in his own defence:

> Neither on this nor any other occasion did I receive a cent over expenses, and usually they have been paid in Toronto. Neither Parry nor anybody else has documentary evidence or any other kind of evidence against my amateur standing. I am not much of a letter writer, and besides, the opportunities for graft are neither frequent nor enticing.

Goulding's long association with the various regiments prompted them to come to his support. Lieutenant De Loiselle, President of the 23rd Regiment Athletic Association of New York made the following public statement:

> He has come down here several times to walk at our meets. On every occasion his demands in the way of expense money have been very modest — in fact, he has made no demands at all; writing each time that he would come down at our expense, no money figure being mentioned. Last spring, he specified he would gladly waive the handsome special prize which the regiment usually gives to winners of its special feature events. George Goulding has always conducted himself as an amateur and a gentleman.

An investigation finally exonerated Goulding, finding there was no evidence that he accepted money in excess of expenses and he was later cleared of another charge of "unfair competition."

The Central Y.M.C.A., Goulding's "home-from-home" in Toronto around 1910.

George Goulding retired after the 1916 season and devoted himself to his Y.M.C.A. work and coaching. In 1921 he moved to Vancouver and opened a sport and cycle shop which he hoped would flourish because of his name. When the lease ran out and he was compelled to move the business, he was forced into bankruptcy. In a desperate bid for solvency or recognition, he attempted a comeback as a race walker at Madison Square Gardens in 1925. In the race, he collapsed on the track with a heart attack and was hospitalized in New York for several weeks. He ended his working days in Toronto as an employee of the Welfare Department. Goulding died in 1966 at the age of 81. ♦

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Armand Trochu's Home on the Range

By Darlene Polachic

No one knows for sure why Armand Trochu came to Canada; his surviving letters and diaries give few clues. But his presence in Alberta was to leave a colourful imprint on the province's history. Nearly a hundred years later Trochu's memory lives on in the town that bears his name and in the St. Ann Ranch and Trading Company, a testament of his vision to build himself an empire in the West.

Armand Jean Louis Leon Trochu was born 15 April, 1857 at Belle Isle, off the coast of Brittany, France. The son of wealthy aristocrats, he was the nephew of General Louis Jules Trochu, Governor of Paris during the 1870 Franco-Prussian War. Armand was educated at St. Francis Xavier College in Vannes, did the customary stint in the military and by the time he married Marguerite Marie Lorois of Nantes in 1882 had established himself in Paris as a stockbroker. Then, on 3 October 1901, at the age of 44, Armand Trochu sailed alone for Canada.

It would seem Trochu's purpose was to investigate Canada's agricultural prospects, for a letter to his sister written upon his arrival in Montreal ten days later mentions a group of priests he had met aboard the Allen Line Royal Mail Steamer S. S. *Perrisiver*. "They were very nice and insisted that I come and spend several days in the community near Montreal. I will probably go; it seems that the superior is a distinguished agronomist."

Trochu spent more than several days in Montreal. It was late May of the following year before he finally headed west by train for Calgary.

Trochu was met at the Calgary railway station by Raymond de Malherbe, a countryman. Malherbe owned a ranch in the Millarville area to the southwest, a 300-square-kilometer community that was already settled by several dozen ranches, many belonging to French-speaking people. Malherbe's property, Sheep Creek Horse Ranch, otherwise known as "Frenchman's Place", was a favorite retreat for French visitors.

Apparently eager to learn all he could about agriculture and ranching, Trochu threw himself heartily into a spring round-up that was taking place at the time of his arrival in Calgary. As he explained by letter to his brother-in-law Georges in France: ". . . We have a gathering of horses which run free on the prairie and chose the animals that we want to sell . . . All the cowboys belonging to all the ranches in the country get together and start an immense fan of hundreds of square kilometers to bring back all the horses. A few are crazy and wild. We push them in front of us and finally put them in a corral . . . a large wooden enclosure . . . They have all been marked on the hip with a red hot iron called a branding iron . . . These brands are registered at the General office of the Territories in Regina."

For a dignified aristrocrat like Trochu, all this must have been very strange and new. But his letters indicate an admirable adaptability. "I would have liked you to see your old brother-in-law act like a cowboy," he wrote Georges. "Just like a professional . . . descending hills at a full gallop. Never, ever would I try this on a French horse . . . All the cowboys who were with us at the start and broke out laughing just by looking at us, laugh no more . . ."

"The place where we had most trouble," Trochu reported, "was when we tried to cross the streets of Calgary with a herd of half-wild horses. We had to cross there so we could cross the river. This did not go smoothly."

Accustomed to the more genteel European equestrian trappings, Trochu found the Canadian cowboy saddles nothing short of amazing: "Virtual monuments with a big handle on the pommel to tie the lasso once you have roped the horse, and behind you another monument that forms the back plus gigantic wooden stirrups wrapped in copper."

The cowboys themselves he found to be "a good lot, but you have to know how to take them. They are proud as peacocks . . . very picturesque with their enormous hats held behind their heads by a cord, their red shirts, flowing red ties and big Mexican pants . . . They are afraid of nothing." So impressed was the Parisian Trochu that he soon adopted the same garb for himself.

Armand Trochu in full cowboy outfit, which he adopted shortly after his arrival in the West in 1902.

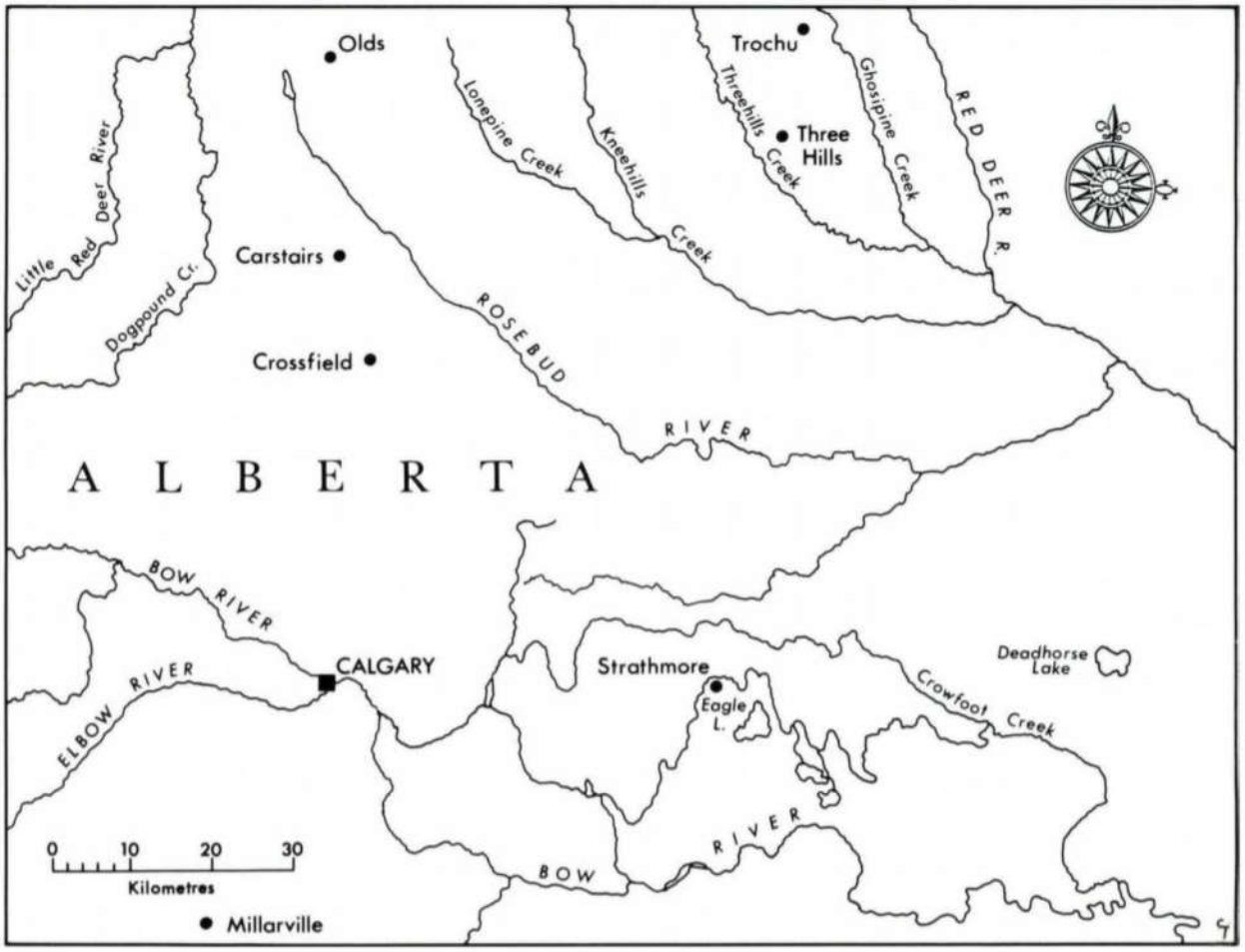
Trochu was not, however, impressed by what he termed "the unbelievable laziness of some people in this country. In Calgary, which is a charming little town with a big future and well-stocked with everything," he wrote his relatives, "when the weather is bad they don't open the stores before noon on the pretext that we're better off in bed. When people do come out (and the majority of ranchers pass their time in Calgary rather than looking after their business) they are preoccupied with great vigor in all manner of drink. It is the vice of the country."

The Calgary of 1902 was a town "of cowboys and ranchmen who gallop their horses in the streets or leave their horses with reins dragging in front of the barroom doors."

Following the round-up, Trochu accompanied Malherbe to Sheep Creek Ranch where he spent several months. His sojourn was full of new experiences and challenges. Neighbours, he found, were few and far between. Going to visit took some effort since there were no roads. "We go on horseback. There are several rivers and creeks that don't have bridges so we ford them on horseback when there is little water, or we swim across when there is lots of water." As well, he learned to endure the cowboy's diet of sardines in oil, rancid lard and canned goods. "Though we are surrounded by animals on all sides, we seldom eat meat . . . We could," he supposed, "share a beef among the ranchers . . ."

More and more Trochu was being convinced there was a good living to be made in horse and cattle ranching and by early 1903 he had begun searching for a suitable place to start an enterprise of his own. Excerpts from his journal tell of one exploratory trek north along the foothills. Trochu was accompanied by two prospective partners, Louis de Chauney, a young Frenchman from Calgary, and another man Trochu refers to only as "Henry".

> **April 29, 1903:** I leave at 2:00 with my two companions, de Chauney and Henry, and two work horses packing out supplies, a second-hand tent which has to be entered on hands and knees, a few provisions, flour and canned goods. We make only 15 miles and camp on the prairies close to a slough which held water full of microbes and which we had to boil in



our kettle before drinking. Our cooking utensils consist of a kettle and a frying pan.

April 30: 11°F (-10°C) at five in the morning; the night was rather bad. The ground does not make a soft bed and all we have each is a rawhide sheet and a blanket. The horses are hobbled and did not wander far. We packed up and at 6:00 at night we arrived without incident at Crossfield, a little village, where we camped.

May 1: Very cold! We left early despite the bad weather. Henry was thrown by his horse and the horse ran away. De Chauney and myself lost almost three hours in capturing him, the whole time at a full gallop. We arrive at night at Carstairs, a little hole.

May 2: Nice weather. We made around 30 miles and arrived tonight at Olds, the last inhabited place before we leave the civilized world. We hire a guide, an Irishman, who's been in this country for ten years and who knows it, he claims.

May 3: We head towards the north-west. We ford the little Red and the Big Red Deer River; the latter was rather difficult. We took an unwilling bath. The water is cold but the weather is nice. We arrived at night at a steeler's place, the last in this direction. We slept there. Up to the present we live on ducks and prairie chickens that I shoot on the trail without looking for them, and that I boil in our kettle.

May 4: We push on to the west and enter the forest. Henry is starting to complain. The horses stumble at every instant over trees fallen by wind or age and are acting wild. Henry complains more and more. We camp close to the Big Red Deer River in a very lovely valley but which is frequently ravaged by hail, or so I'm told.

May 5: We re-enter the forest, forced at several places to blaze a trail with our hatchets. Henry wants no part of it and grumbles all the time. He will be dispirited the whole trip. De Chauney has extraordinary energy, always happy and nothing gets him down. Le Rods, our guide, seems melancholy but I can't get anything out of him. We camp in the forest. Our horses have nothing to eat except a few apples.

Canadian government publications lured new settlers to the North West with advertisements that stressed the romance and heroic scale of the new lands.

May 6: No horses! Despite their hobbles, they have disappeared. Very difficult to pick up their trail in the spongy ground. Our guide, de Chauney and myself push on on foot following their faint trail and find our horses near 2:00 in the afternoon. The poor beasts were searching for food but not finding much. We advance slowly and arrive near the Clearwater river where we camp. I hollow out the ground and sleep like a marmot.

May 7: We return to our route. Our guide admits he has no idea where we are and is completely demoralized. I take charge of the group and follow the compass. Henry is completely defeated and is incapable of any service. We continue with our hatchets through the trees and re-find the Clearwater at nightfall in a magnificent valley. The riverbanks are impossible to descend. All night long we hear the howling of the wolves, the yapping of the coyotes, the bugle of the elk and above all, the frightening growls of the bears, but we see none of these animals. The forest is so thick you could pass beside one and not even see it.

May 9: We leave the forest and arrive in a valley where I had wanted to see a trapper, Nevenever, who is married to an Indian woman and knows the country well. He had left for Miefrid, 60 miles away. I fire the guide without pay; he doesn't insist, and I send de Chauney to Miefrid to find Nevenever. He returns May 12. During this time I explore the region left and right; find a river not marked on the map; modified my map and shot two big geese, taking three days to eat them.

May 13: From the directions of Nevenever, we leave for the Saskatchewan River where we arrive on the 14 without incident and see the valley of which Talboat [Talbot?] had spoken. It is magnificent but with very steep banks like the others. We realize that this country could rage war on a little capitalist and his ranch. I decide to return. We have the luck to fall upon a party of Stoney Indians on the hunt and going in our direction. We communicate with great difficulty in sign language. These brave Indians had with them their wives and numerous children. The women are on the ponies with the youngest of the children strapped to their backs. The other children are on foot acting like fierce warriors. I traded with them one pound of tea for 12 muskrat skins.

May 15: We march all day with the Indians. That night, after vigorously shaking our hands, they leave us to head west while we head east. [The Indians had given Armand Trochu an Indian name that meant "the one who knows how to be a friend".]

May 16: We continue our march to the east with the hatchets for part of the journey. The horses are beginning to tire; their bellies are getting gaunt. Near 2:00 in the afternoon the sky becomes black as ink and explodes into a furious storm of wind and rain. Despite our raincoats we are soaked to the skin in an hour. At 5:00 we pitch our tent on soggy ground and distribute our supplies. Regardless of our precautions, our waterproof oilcloth has been ripped in the forest. Our supplies are soaked, as well as our

blankets. We try to light a fire. Impossible because of the torrents of rain. We dine on ham and bannock . . . we have no bread. We make the dough out of flour and cook it on a stick. It is always burnt on the outside and raw in the middle. After our meal we rolled soaking wet into soaking wet blankets and despite this we slept like logs. I wake up in the dark. I look at the time; seven o'clock in the morning and it is dusk at four! I slide out of our frozen tent with pain and find outside and on our tent at least a foot of snow. A terrible snowstorm that lasts all day of the 17 and all day of the 18. We are forced to tie up our horses close to the trees; they are going mad. We are finally able to light a fire on the night of the 17th and have half-dried out our clothes.

The storm eventually abated and five days later Trochu and his companions were back in Calgary. The trip had been useless as far as finding ranchland was concerned, but it taught Trochu a great deal about his would-be partners. "I still work alone with what I have," he wrote home. "It will take longer, but I hope to succeed anyway."

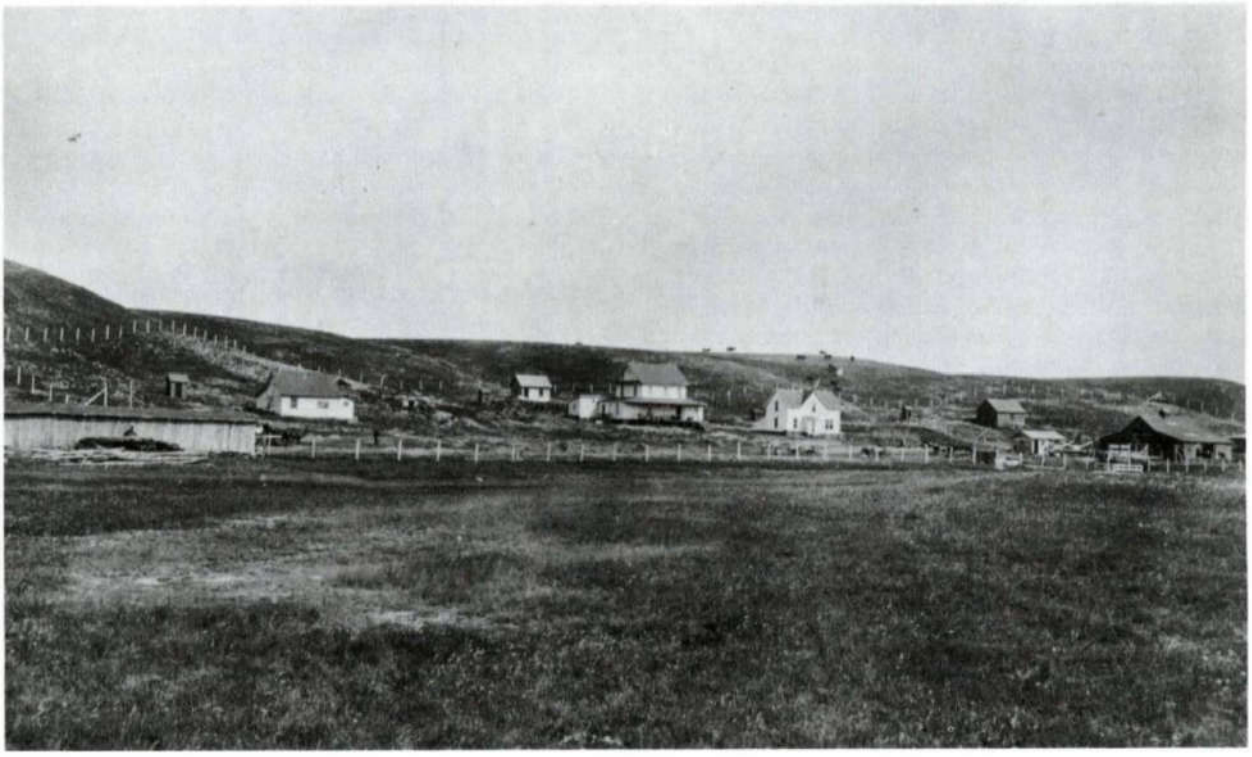
Trochu refused to be discouraged, and his persistence was rewarded less than a month later when "an old squatter" told him of a sheltered coulee with bubbling springs that never went dry in summer and didn't freeze in winter. Trochu immediately left to investigate, taking de Chauney whom he had hired on at $25 a month.

The coulee was situated about 160 kilometers northeast of Calgary, between Three Hills Creek and Devil's (Ghost) Pine Creek. It was a five-day ride: "We suffered a lot from mosquitoes while crossing big marshes. We had a great number of creeks to cross swollen by the spring thaw. Naturally there were no bridges and no easy approach. The old squatter had told me that when I had trouble crossing a creek I was to gather the big skulls of the long-dead buffaloes which are scattered around and that they will make a good ford. Sure enough, it worked."

But the arduous journey was worth it. Trochu liked what he saw and immediately returned to Calgary to arrange purchase from the Hudson's Bay Company, owners of the land. This parcel, the north half of Section 8, Township 33, Range 23, west of the 4th meridian, plus another piece he would buy when the area was thrown open to homesteaders, would eventually border two sides of the future town of Trochu.

Armand Trochu's energy and enthusiasm seemed boundless as he set to work building his ranch. St. Ann's of Three Hills, he called it, after St. Ann, the patron saint of his birthplace in Brittany.

Cattle graze along the skyline in this 1906 view of the Trochu Valley and the St. Ann Ranch and Trading Company headquarters. The three large residences belong to Leon Eckenfelder (left), Joseph Devilder (middle) and Armand Trochu (right).



The ranchers relax indoors, December 1905. Standing (left to right) Armand Trochu, Dr. Louis Schulier and Joseph Devilder. Seated (left to right) Leon Eckenfelder, Marquis de Seilhac and Edgar Papillard.

Lumber for his house and barn was purchased in Calgary along with a wagon and Clydesdale/Percheron team to haul it back to the coulee. The shack, "a single room for de Chauney and myself and two bedrooms" was 20 feet by 12 feet; the furniture, minimal. "Two chairs and a table," he informed his sister, "no beds because we're accustomed to sleeping on the ground or on boards with a blanket."

By the end of 1903 Trochu's house and barn were finished, fences and corrals were under construction, and a hundred shorthorn steers grazed the pasture-land. As well, Trochu had begun looking into breeding thoroughbred horses on the ranch. This, however, was an expensive proposition and Trochu was out of money.

In 1904, he returned to France to visit his wife and three daughters who had remained in the family home at St. Clementin, as well as to explore the availability of investment capital or — despite his former resolve to work alone — to find a suitable partner to share in his Western Canadian venture.

Trochu found himself not one partner, but two. Joseph Devilder and Leon Eckenfelder, both in their early thirties, were former French cavalry officers.

Devilder, the son of a Lille banking family, was the wealthier of Trochu's new partners. He arrived at the ranch in late 1904. When Eckenfelder joined them, the St. Ann Ranch and Trading Company was founded in 1905 and was to become the most important business enterprise in the area.

The partnership was an instant success. Accustomed as they were to military life, Devilder and Eckenfelder had no trouble adapting to the spartan living conditions of the Trochu establishment. They quickly fell into a workable routine which Eckenfelder described in a letter to his parents dated 16 February 1905: "Our existence, calm and occupied, drifts away without incident in our peaceful, tranquil valley. Father Trochu, whom we have nicknamed "Colonel", is the first one up at 4:00. He lights the fire, makes the porridge and coffee; the doctor does the cooking the rest of the day. Devilder makes the bread and I haul the hay all day long, take care of the horses and steers. In the evenings we sometimes stay a bit late, smoke a few pipes while telling stories of the regiment."

The doctor in Eckenfelder's letter was Dr. Louis Schulier, one of a number of other Frenchmen who

Joseph Devilder in Trochu's house, about 1904. The bread on the table was possibly baked by Devilder.

had joined the settlement. Many were fellow cavalry officers, several of them titled. Among the men were names such as Edgar Papillard; Theodoli-Theodoli, an Italian officer of Roman high nobility; Marc de Cathelineau, who was raised on an Argentinian "rancho"; Baron de Preault; Marquis de Seilhac; François de Torquat; Baron Herve de Reinach-werth. A year or so earlier, Count Paul de Beaudrap had settled his family 12 miles away on a property he had purchased for $1,000 and named Jeanne d'Arc Ranch. Other de Beaudrap relatives and friends from France came as well, buying land or taking homesteads.

With such a strong cavalry influence, perhaps it is not surprising that horsebreeding became a major preoccupation of the St. Ann Ranch. By August of 1905 a herd of 50 brood mares and a Percheron stallion had been built up. As well, Eckenfelder wrote his parents, Devilder was bringing back a second stallion — an Ardennais, from France. A year later 4 more Percherons and 3 Belgians were imported.

Like Malherbe's place at Millarville, the St. Ann Ranch quickly became the hospitality centre of the area. Since it was largely a bachelor establishment, the company constructed a spacious "Stopping Place" to accommodate the growing numbers of visitors. This coulee version of a country inn was managed by Dr. Schulier and serviced by two Chinese cooks. It became a popular gathering place for everyone in the area, doubling as a dancehall and eventually housing the first post office and general store.

Other changes were taking place in Trochu's valley. Trochu had enlarged his house; Eckenfelder and Devilder built homes of their own. Devilder's was an impressive edifice that served as St. Ann Ranch Headquarters. A livery stable run by Louis de Chauney and a blacksmith shop were set up near the Stopping Place. So was a creamery. Bunk houses and other ranch buildings dotted the valley.

Trochu's garden was something of a phenomenon in the district. With seeds brought from France, he grew carrots, radish, lettuce, onions, peas, parsley, beets, cucumbers, celery, cabbage, turnips, endive, and potatoes that his diary notes came from Miquelon. The colourful array of cosmos, portulaca, marigold, aster, balsam, zinnias, and sweetpeas must have been a wonder to coulee visitors.

But Trochu had other things to occupy his time. Of the Trading Company partners, he was the one who travelled about drumming up markets for the ranch's cattle and horses. In early 1906 he made a trip East — a trip, he wrote to his brother-in-law Maurice, with which he was ". . . very pleased . . . because I believe that I have organized, in exceptionally good terms, the shipment of my steers to England . . ."

On the same trip Trochu was welcomed in Ottawa by a number of federal cabinet ministers and the Prime

Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Laurier was particularly cordial. "I don't know why," Trochu wrote his family, "but I suppose that I am in fashion at the moment."

While in Ottawa, Trochu obtained a "great many favours such as the construction of roads, bridges over creeks, and at last, a post office that will be . . . named Trochu Valley."

He and the prime minister conversed for two hours ". . . and at the end the prime minister . . . taking me by the arm, walked to the window and showing me the House of Parliament, said . . . "Remember that at the next legislature (three years away, with any luck) I reserve a seat at the federal parliament. I am absolutely counting on you; you will be the official candidate and will have no real opposition to fear."

Trochu never ran for political office, but he did get his post office. In August of 1906 he was appointed its first post-master.

Despite its rapid and prosperous expansion, St. Ann's Ranch was not without its setbacks. In the spring of 1906 a prairie fire ripped through the valley threatening the settlement's existence. The result of carelessness, the fire swept the coulee, destroying haystacks, burning down corrals, laying waste precious pastureland and killing fifty prize Percherons which were found piled up in a corner of the pasture where they had rushed to escape the inferno. The fire burned out a strip fifty miles long and left alive only a fraction of their 2,000 head of cattle.

Adding to their difficulties was the winter that followed. Indians claimed it was the worst since 1881. Much of the ranch's remaining cattle perished in the killing blizzards that alternated with unusually deep snow hazardously softened by frequent chinooks.

Still, hope surged anew next spring when the CPR sent out their engineers to survey the area for a proposed rail line that would run through Ranch Company property. "The railway," Trochu explained in a letter to his sister and brother-in-law, ". . . will give us a big expansion and has aready tripled the value of the land." The CPR line was surveyed to pass 4 kilometers west of the settlement, but at Trochu's persuasion it was re-routed so the station would be less than half a kilometer from Ranch Headquarters.

Eager with anticipation, Trochu and his partners subdivided the land on the hill west of the main ranch and began development of a townsite. Lots and blocks were neatly laid out on a patterned grid. A hotel was built and applications taken for boarders. A barracks for the North West Mounted Police detachment to the area was constructed. The St. Ann Ranch was to build the barracks and barn, plus furnish food for the horses and food for the men. For this, they would be paid $150 a month. The barracks, with its 3-cell prison, was completed in eight days. Amidst all the activity, Trochu's wife Marguerite and their daughters arrived to take up residence at the ranch.

Some of the company's thoroughbred horses graze near fresh water in Trochu's coulee. The garden is behind them.

Leon Eckenfelder cutting trees for his log house on the banks of the Red Deer River, a few miles from the ranch.

Paul de Beaudrap opened a butcher shop. A general store was built and Devilder's sister, Philomene Butruille, with an entourage consisting of her husband Jean, 5 children, a cook, a governess, 2 English maids, and 48 pieces of baggage arrived to run it. Marc de Cathelineau put up an elegant new dancehall. Before long there was a livery stable and a school. There was also a new Roman Catholic church which was the site of Leon Eckenfelder's wedding to Valentine Figarol in October of 1907. A coalmine was opened. There was even some drilling for oil, though none was found.

Understandably, it was a major blow to the Company's hopes for prosperity when the CPR decided against sending the branch line to Trochu. It wasn't until 1912 that rail service would finally reach the area, and then by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad which ran its line a considerable distance to the east. Much of the developed townsite had to be relocated to allow access to the railroad.

Perhaps the significant change in the structure of the St. Ann Ranch and Trading Company came in 1908 when Joseph Devilder was called back to France. Devilder departed for Lille to take over management of the family bank, but his sister, Mme. Butruille, and her family continued to live in the impressive ranch headquarters house. It was she who enlarged and remodelled the Devilder house to the 30-room, 4-storey classic Queen Anne style dwelling that remains today.

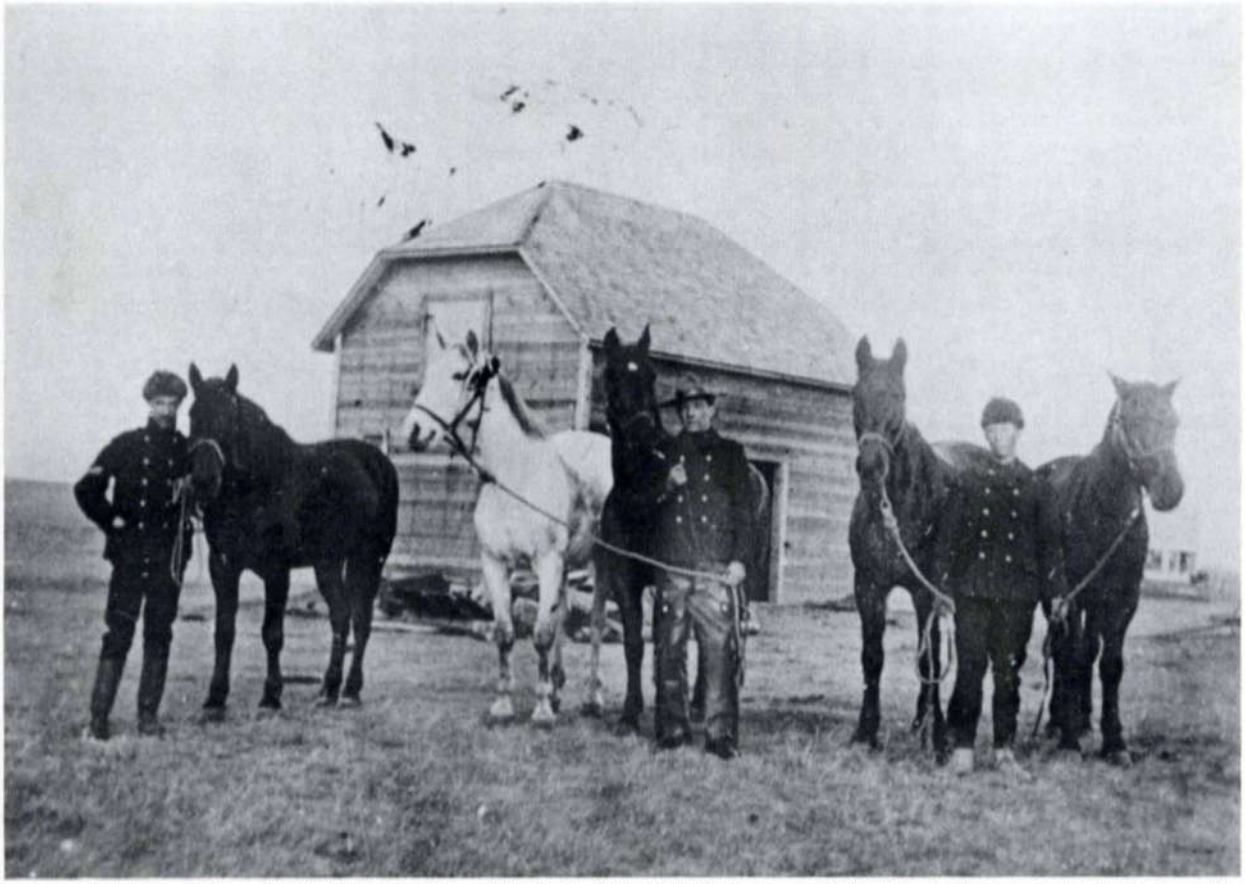
Though other ethnic groups had moved into the area, the settlement's aristocratic French influence remained strong, resulting in a community that was unlike any other in the province. Dances in de Cathelineau's elegant hall, it is said, were reminiscent of grand French balls. Musical recitals, or soirées, were regularly held in the Devilder drawingroom. Activities such as polo, steeplechase, and other equestrian events were a common occurrence. There were European-style hunts, with coyotes filling in for the traditional fox. Theodoli was said to own the finest pack of hunting hounds in the province.

Armand Trochu: gentleman rancher.

The association was further strengthened by the arrival of the Sisters of Charity of Notre Dame d'Evron who established a residence in the old Stopping Place and soon had a 25-bed hospital in operation.

Even during the bachelor era *cuisine* at St. Ann's was a cut above the average frontier fare. Eckenfelder enumerated the delicacies on their 1905 Christmas menu: "Filet de boeuf, sauce chasseur, potatoes, bechamel and an 18-pound turkey, ice cream and pâté of prairie chicken which was a marvel."

French loyalty was never more evident than in 1914 when war broke out in Europe. Almost to the man,



Corporal Tucker and Constables Ralph and Davidson of the Trochu Valley NWMP detachment. Behind them is the barn attached to the barracks that the St. Ann Ranch Company built in eight days. Photograph circa 1912.

the French expatriots who qualified for service rushed to defend the homeland. It was a move that would change the face of Trochu and the St. Ann Ranch forever. Most of them never returned.

Trochu was too old for war service and remained behind to oversee the ranch as well as the operations of a number of the absent Frenchmen. It was not a properous time, nor a happy one.

In 1917, Trochu suffered a serious heart attack and soon after he returned to France to join his wife and daughters who had gone back five years earlier. Much of the St. Ann Ranch and Trading Company land was surrendered to the village, while the ranch site in the coulee was taken over by Edgar Papillard who had married Devilder's sister, the widowed Philomene Butruille. Upon the Papillard's return to France in 1930, the ranch became the property of Ernest Frere, another of the original Frenchmen and grandfather of the present owner.

An unimposing man in build and stature, Armand Trochu was nevertheless impressive in terms of vision and enterprising spirit. To the strongly French community he was a patriarch and a gentleman of distinction; to the St. Ann Ranch he was the heart and the motivating force. Though many of his grand initiatives were doomed to failure — the town of Trochu never became the Calgary-rivalling metropolis its namesake invisioned — Trochu nevertheless left his mark on the land.

The St. Ann Ranch and Trading Company, owned by Louis and Lorene Frere, is still in operation. In 1988 it was declared a Provincial Historic Site. The Devilder House is now a year-round bed-and-breakfast facility, and houses a summer tearoom. Many of the original ranch buildings are still intact and work has begun to restore them to their original state. Visitors to the ranch have access to a collection of more than 600 photographs of the early days on the St. Ann Ranch, as well as translated diaries and letters from Trochu and Eckenfelder to relatives in France. ♦

Freelance writer Darlene Polachic lives at Three Hills, Alberta. All photographs courtesy of Lorene Frere, Trochu, Alberta.

'A Visitation of Providence'

By Margaret Southall

From a window of the Iroquois Falls hospital, nurse Isabelle Scott saw "terrifying black clouds" rolling toward the town from the north at 1 p.m. "In a short time, the sun looked like a huge ball of blood in the sky. Then the whole earth darkened. Everything was very silent. There was a feeling something dreadful was going to happen," nurse Scott later told a reporter. Shortly after, fire broke out in the town.

Near Matheson, William Dowson, a bricklayer, saw the same huge black clouds from the shed in which he and a friend took cover from a 75 mph wind. The two fled at 1:30 p.m. when the shed was struck by a wave of heat and smoke. About the same time Hec Clemens, owner of Cochrane's King George Hotel, told patrons "Let the liquor go to blazes!" when the advancing fire made him close the bar. Outside, a town councillor dashed through Cochrane on horseback, yelling "Fire! Fire! Make for the railway!"

It was 29 July 1916 and the fire that began that Saturday — the Matheson Fire — continued until Sunday, destroying six communities, laying waste 500,000 acres and claiming 223 lives — the largest death toll from a Canadian forest fire this century.

Ontario was in the grip of a heat wave that summer of 1916. People fainted on Toronto streets and a few died. The Toronto *Star* warned employers of the health risk of pushing workers too hard in the hot weather. In "New Ontario", a huge area stretching from North Bay to Hudson Bay and west from the Quebec border, the heat had brought drought. Advertised as the "poor man's hope" and a place to build a future, "New Ontario" was a pioneer country, attracting settlers from southern Ontario and overseas. For those farming in the Matheson, Iroquois Falls and Cochrane area, the harvest that year from the claybelt's fertile soils promised to be a good one, and haying had started.

In the thick northern Ontario bushland forest fires were part of life, especially during the summer months. Settlers seemed to regard fire as "a visitation of Providence," said the *Star*, something they must live with. Cochrane, established in 1908, had been burned out twice, including the Porcupine Fire of 1911 that devastated Timmins, South Porcupine and neighbouring communities. A few days before the Matheson Fire, a bush fire caused Iroquois Falls hospital to be evacuated. However, fire was useful to the settler. It cost $20 - $30 an acre to clear land bought for 50 cents an acre from the government. Setting a fire to do this cut the price to $2 an acre or less.

By 29 July, after two months without rain, the area encompassing Matheson, Iroquois Falls and Cochrane was tinder-dry. If settlers were concerned about the fire hazard, their actions indicated otherwise. Small fires were burning everywhere. Settlers were burning to clear land; woodcutters were burning the brush from the winter's cut; in Matheson, railway gangs were burning scrub on the railway right-of-way and in the station yard. Unlike other provinces, Ontario had no regulations or permit system to prevent settlers starting these fires.

With so many small fires burning, it is impossible to tell whether the Matheson Fire began in one area and took a specific direction or developed simultaneously in several locations. But whipped into a fury by the high wind — a wind that formed white caps on the Black River and blew the roof off a house — the fire advanced relentlessly.

Although Matheson had no regular water supply or firefighting equipment, its citizens used every available utensil to douse buildings with water drawn by wagons from the Black River. When the fire entered the town at the corner of Railway Street and Sixth Avenue, about 100 people escaped by jumping aboard a freight train for a terrifying journey to Englehart "through walls of fire." Passengers stuffed wet cloths into cracks of the tightly closed cars to keep out flames and smoke. When two cars caught fire and had to be uncoupled, the occupants transferred to others. With telephone and telegraph wires down, the engineer of a freight train travelling behind was unaware of the one ahead. The first train stopped and freightman W.L. Lewis fought his way through flames and smoke to flag down the oncoming train, thus preventing a dis-

aster. Two tankers of gasoline on the second train passed through the flames without igniting.

Back in Matheson, Captain Smith, the owner of a temperance hotel, gathered 50 women and children and took them to a spot by the river over which the fire had passed. Covered with wet blankets, the group remained until rescued by a launch that evening.

Prospector William Fairbairn had to swear and use force to hurry another group of frightened, reluctant people across a bridge to the far side of the Black River, where they spent the night fearing the worst. To bolster flagging spirits, Rita Monahan and Laura Lougheed let the group in hymn singing.

No lives were lost in Matheson, but it was a different story in the surrounding area. Whole families suffocated in root-cellars and wells, or were burned by embers as they ran from the 40-mile wide wall of flames, the heat of which caused creek water to boil.

In Nushka, just north of Matheson, the priest, Rev. Wilfred Gagne, led 35 of his flock to what they thought was safety in a clay hut by the railway tracks. Many suffocated as the fire swept in, and the priest burned to death with 28 others. One of the four Nushka survivors was a soldier who said his woolen uniform saved him; others around him died when their cotton clothing caught sparks.

Near Matheson, Frank Monahan led the women and children of three families to safety in a well when their homes exploded in flames. Monahan used plank covering to construct scaffolding inside the well. When the clothing of a 12-year-old girl carrying her baby sister caught fire, Monahan tore it off. He tried to save the baby, but the child was overcome. Monahan then used his hat as a pail to throw water on the group.

Cut off by the flames at their farm northwest of Matheson, a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Percy Alderston, sat down on the ground, hoping to avoid the fire. When her husband became blinded by smoke and partially unconscious, Mrs. Alderston used a badly-burned horse to take her husband to Matheson.

While picking up settlers along Lady Maude Lake, a launch became overloaded so everyone got into the water, using blankets to protect themselves from embers. The boat was burned full of holes and the settlers waded to safety on land.

In the village of Kelso, 12-year-old Iris Reid was left in charge of her brothers and sisters while her father, Dr. James Reid, was firefighting. When the freight train came in, Iris had the presence of mind to get the children aboard. The train left and Dr. Reid died trying to save the school.

At Iroquois Falls, the Abitibi Power and Paper Company town on the Abitibi River, men, women, children, horses and cattle took refuge in the newsprint mill, where one woman gave birth. Mrs. Frank Bevins, a nurse, feared the piles of sulphite would ignite and

Part of the fire that engulfed the Matheson-Cochrane area, July 1916.

Ontario Dept. of Lands and Forests

National Archives of Canada

Survivors pose amid the devastation following the fire. Those with food or goods left shared with the less fortunate.

suffocate everyone. Outside, men, using the company's firefighting equipment, created a wall of water against the mill while thousands of cords of pulpwood burned in the millyard.

There was no firefighting equipment across the tracks at The Wye, the area where those who couldn't get a foothold in the company town lived. To rescue them, engineer Sam McKay and fireman Walter O'Connell ran their train up and down the track blocked by a car of dynamite at one end and a powder mill at the other end. Despite the flames, the dynamite was untouched.

"Her heroism has thrilled the north," the *Star* said of nurse Isabelle Scott who, with no thought for her own safety, rescued women and children from The Wye's burning shacks by covering them with wet blankets. When nurse Scott and Mrs. Kaspar Lechnar dashed into the empty hospital for supplies, flames amost engulfed the two. Covering them with a wet blanket, engineer McKay took them back to the train.

Eight people died in Iroquois Falls, all at The Wye. When two sisters found their family's dead bodies in a ditch, one was so distraught she tried to cut her throat with a blunt knife. The other couldn't see the bodies because she was blinded by smoke. Both recovered.

"Head of steel" for the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway, Cochrane was a railway maintenance and repair centre at the T. & N.O.'s junction with the Canadian Pacific Railway. When the fire struck the town, its people ran for the safety of railway roundhouses and trains. Three hotels and two banks were destroyed when the town's business district went up in flames. It was the third time Cochrane had been burned out, causing Premier Sir William Hearst to describe its citizens as "people of courage and resource."

A 20-year-old telephone operator, Edith Jamieson, displayed those qualities when the exchange caught fire. She remained at her desk, calmly answering calls from frightened people. Her last call, before being dragged to safety by the manager, was to warn the next station of the approaching fire.

Private Ray Cooper was in Cochrane to recruit men for the war in Europe. Seeing the fire and commotion

from his hotel window, he went out and tried to rescue two women, but the two were overcome by smoke and died.

A young mother, Mrs. Morella, had wheeled her baby's carriage into the furniture store for safety when she heard that her nearby house was burning. Leaving her baby in the store, she dashed down the street to find that her house was not on fire. But fire had suddenly jumped the street and engulfed the store. The baby died.

Cochrane's volunteer firefighters tried to fight the blaze, using a new water system installed after the 1911 fire. An ample supply of water was pumped from lakes north and south of the town, but the intense heat turned it to steam in the hoses.

When the smoke cleared on Sunday 30 July, Matheson, Iroquois Falls, Porquis Junction, Nushka, Kelso, Cochrane's business district and 16 houses in Timmins were smouldering ruins. The government's experimental farm at Monteith was saved when the fire split there. Fears of further fire outbreaks were laid to rest when heavy rains began Sunday evening.

Premier Hearst learned of the disaster Sunday at his Muskoka cottage and went immediately to Toronto, where he was joined by Hon. G. Howard Ferguson, minister of lands, mines and forests. There would be "prompt action" and "no expense spared" to bring relief to the survivors, Hearst told reporters.

However, the survivors themselves had already begun the relief effort, those with homes left standing or goods sharing what they had with the less fortunate. Their food included potatoes baked on the vine and the partially roasted remains of chickens. Hec Clemens fed Cochrane people with food saved from his ruined hotel. Mrs. Walter Monahan baked 100 pounds of flour into biscuits for her Matheson neighbours. Lacking medical supplies, Jim Hough used axle grease and sheets to tend Matheson burn victims.

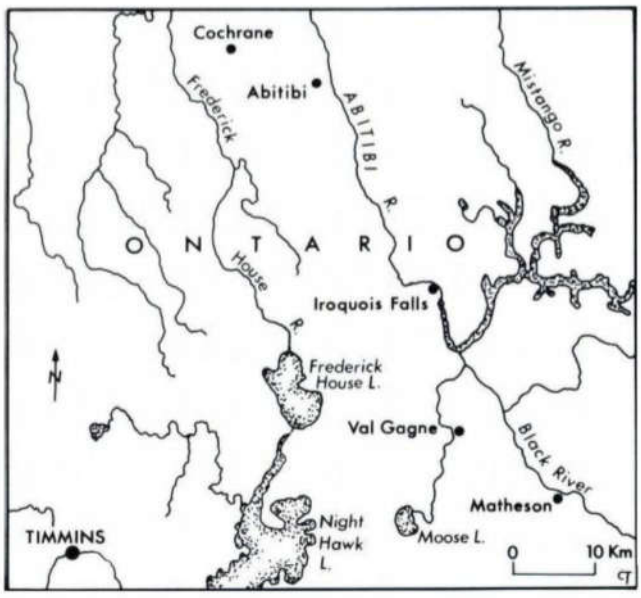
The railways, particularly the T. & N.O., were the settler's lifeline during normal times, and it was to the railway that they turned for help during and after the fire. If it had not been for the availability of the trains and the courage of their crews at Matheson and Iroquois Falls, the fire's death toll would have been higher. The Ontario Government put Fred Dane, a former T. & N.O. commissioner, in charge of the relief effort. The first relief train was quickly put together at North Bay to take doctors and nurses into the stricken area. At Cobalt, New Liskeard, Haileybury and Kirkland Lake railway agents organized car pools to canvass for food and clothing. As the train pulled in at each station, carloads of goods were waiting on the platform.

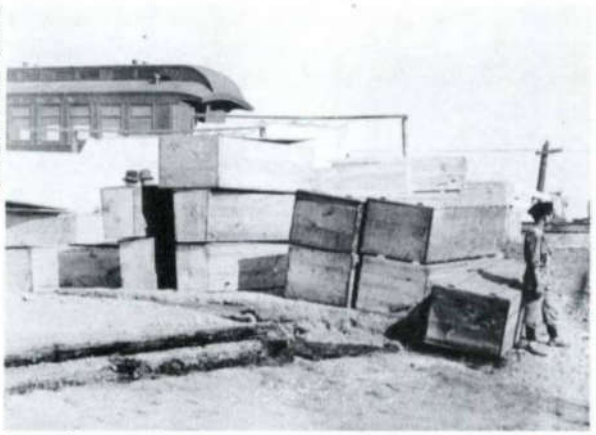
The outside world first learned of the Matheson Fire on Monday 31 July with the publication of the daily newspapers. "North is devastated" read the *Nugget* (North Bay) front page banner headline. In the Toronto papers, saturation coverage of World War I gave way to news of death and destruction at home. Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden called an emergency cabinet meeting and promised Dominion government aid. On behalf of the nation, the Governor-General, H.R.H. Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, sent a message of sympathy.

By then relief trains were heading north, taking 200 soldiers — all northerners — from Camp Borden, as well as tents, food, clothing, medical teams and supplies. The T. Eaton Company shipped $3,000 worth of relief goods from Winnipeg, and a Kitchener company sent hundreds of pairs of rubber boots — a godsend for the many survivors whose footwear had burned in the fire. Distribution of supplies was equitable and there were few complaints.

The railways took the injured to hospitals in northern towns and provided free return passage for those heading south to stay with relatives or seek temporary work. Survivors told harrowing stories of ordinary people showing courage in the face of tragedy that filled newspaper columns for a week.

The official death toll for the Matheson Fire was 223 but, because there was so much confusion surrounding the collection and burial of bodies, it was probably higher, although provincial medical officer Dr. W.E. George made every effort to compile an accurate record. Burned bridges and lack of horses and wagons made the search for bodies difficult. Officials insisted that bodies buried where they burned had to be disinterred and reburied in cemeteries. Mrs. Wilda Brown, a prospector who was herself trapped by fire in the bush, was adamant that the bodies of many who died in remote areas were not recovered.





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Pine coffins await burial parties along the rail line. The "tent city" can be seen to the rear.

Most of the bodies were taken to makeshift mortuaries in the army's tent city at Matheson, where Dr. George recorded deaths using a pine coffin for a desk. First reports had listed 184 dead, but on 1 August the relief co-ordinator Fred Dane estimated 306, and the number continued to fluctuate for a week. Dr. George revised the death toll downward, stating some bodies were originally counted twice in error. However, remains were often difficult to identify.

"They put five or six bodies in one casket because there was nothing left but bones and they didn't know who the bones belonged to," survivor Mrs. Amelia Veitch recalled years later in a CBC interview.

The majority of the survivors wanted to return north and make "another go of it." A few were better off because the fire had cleared their land, increasing its value. Others had little choice because they had no insurance and nowhere else to go. Despite the demands of the war effort, organizations and individuals gave $296,787 to the Northern Ontario Fire Relief Fund, established on 9 August. Of the $2,134,349 property loss from the fire, $1,054,754 was covered by insurance. Although low by today's standards, these figures should be viewed by 1916 prices: a pair of ladies' shoes, $2.95; a dockworker's 10-hour shift, $2.85; a vaudeville seat, 10 cents.

Of the 949 relief claims, the committee granted 649 for a total value of $150,950. The maximum grant for housebuilding materials was $360 and $160 for a barn. Grants worth $12,000 for settlers who enlisted were held until they returned home. The committee was unable to offer assistance for businesses and buildings such as town halls and hospitals lost in the fire. What remained in the fund was held in trust for relief in future northern fires.

The cause of the Matheson Fire has never been determined although there were several contributing factors. Nature may have been responsible for some of the fires that high winds fanned into the major one, an Ontario Fire Marshal report later indicated. The six to 12-inch layer of humus on top of claybelt soil was a non-porous substance that readily absorbed heat and in dry conditions could ignite. Nature was also responsible for two months of drought, the heat and a 75 mph wind.

The Canadian Forestry Association claimed the tragedy had reached such "appalling proportions" because of the settlers' *laissez-faire* attitude in setting fires and Ontario's lax fire prevention system. It described the fire ranger service for the province's 10 million acres of timber as "out-of-date and inefficient."

"Ontario has no real ranger patrol, carries on no preventive campaign and offers no opposition to the wholesale use of fire by settlers stripping land of trees," the association stated. It urged the province to provide sufficient rangers in the heavily-forested claybelt region, giving them "authority to control settlers' burning operations so such a holocaust has less opportunity to occur."

National Archives of Canada

Survivors dig graves at Matheson after the fire. Around them is a scene of treeless desolation.

On 26 August, a few weeks after the Matheson tragedy, another bush fire broke out at New Liskeard. On 14 October 1922, the Haileybury Fire took 43 lives and caused $6,369,126 property damage.

The towns affected by the Matheson Fire were never ravaged by bush fires again; the 29 July blaze had cleared the area of potential fire hazards. All the communities except Kelso were rebuilt, and Nushka was renamed Val Gagne in honour of its dead priest.

Little now remains to record what happened that Saturday 75 years ago — faded photos and diary entries, a stone cairn on Highway 11 and the vivid stories of the remaining survivors. ♦

Margaret Southall lives in Ottawa. She is a former editor of "The Enterprise" weekly newspaper, serving Iroquois Falls and Matheson.

Life at Gjoa Haven: The Old Ways and the New

By T. C. LANDON

Some 1,160 kilometres north of Winnipeg lies the 60th parallel, where provinces end and territories begin. Another 890 kilometres farther north, well above the Arctic Circle, the North American continent ends at the waters of the Arctic Ocean and the Arctic Archipelago begins. Here the ingenious and tenacious Inuit tamed one of the harshest climates on Earth and lived in it for at least 4,000 years before European explorers penetrated its defences.

This environment was so alien and severe, the population so sparse and resources so limited, that the usual sequence of exploration and mapping, followed by exploitation and colonization, was long-delayed. Even traders, noted for their resourcefulness, avoided the formidable isolation of the Central Arctic until the twentieth century, when they were lured there at last by fashion's demand for furs.

Traders were eventually followed by missionaries, teachers, nurses, and bureaucrats; airplanes, snowmobiles, and satellite TV; Coke and Cheezies and alarm clocks; jeans and baseball caps. But Inuit traditions are remarkably persistent in the Central Arctic, where 4,000 people in eight small communities are scattered over half a million square kilometres of frozen tundra, lakes and ocean.

One of the smallest, most isolated of these communities is Gjoa Haven, on King William Island, where the Inuit are faced with a classic twentieth-century dilemma: How to reconcile their own traditions and values with twentieth-century Canadian culture? How to exercise some control over the speed and scope of cultural change?

Today, a vistor to this ice-locked realm is instantly struck by a bewildering mix of old and new. The Arctic landscape is little changed. The few small settlements, mere specks in the immense expanse of frozen lands and seas, are scarely more noticeable than the nomadic camps of prehistoric times would have been.

In Gjoa Haven, many external changes are obvious at once, but they do not necessarily indicate substantive change. For example, snowmobiles replace dog teams for many families, but both are used in the same way — as "engines" for the all-purpose sleds that transport people and goods for most of the year. Imported parkas, jeans, and runners are popular but have limited uses. No man-made materials can equal the insulating properties of traditional caribou and sealskin clothing.

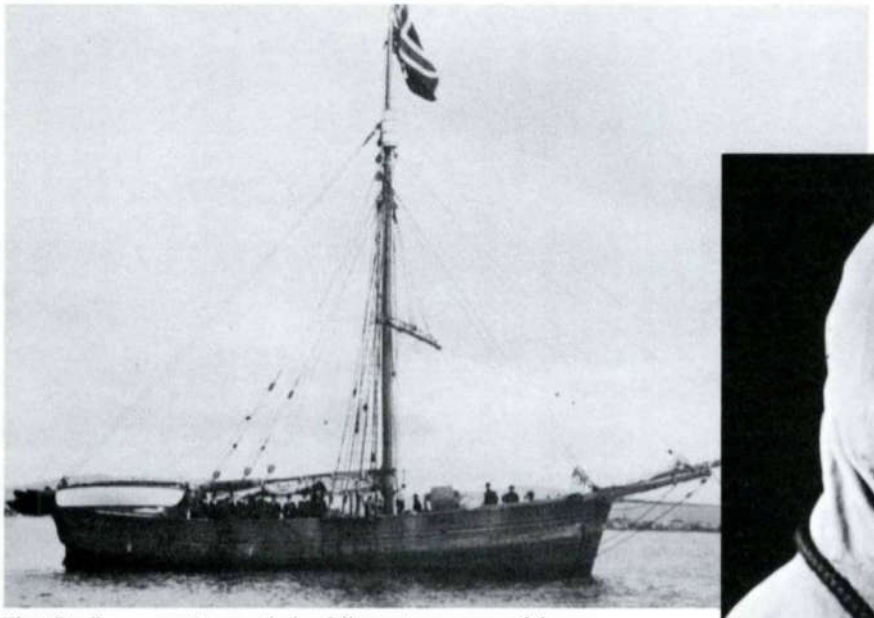
The settlement itself, with its winterized wooden houses, represents more significant changes, modifying nomadic habits but not extinguishing them.

The most consequential change is not a visible one: Death by starvation or freezing is no longer a real and constant peril. Therefore energy, skills, knowledge, even time can now be directed to something other than physical survival. The implications of this very fundamental change are not yet fully recognized by either Inuit or Qallunaat.

Change came late to the Canadian Central Arctic, the last bit of North America to be explored and mapped because it had no habitable land to claim, no riches to plunder. Even the whales avoided its ice-bound seas. Only the persistent dream of a northern route to the Indies provided motivation and money for exploration of the area, while visions of fame and fortune ensured a supply of ambitious naval officers to lead such expeditions.

So although ships were gripped and tossed and sometimes crushed by inexorable and unpredictable ice, and crews suffered intensely from inadequate clothing and food, nineteenth-century adventurers kept returning to challenge the formidable polar seas. Almost every expedition set some record, such as reaching a higher latitude or finding a new island or channel, but although they probed the arctic waters from east and west the crucial link — the fabled Northwest Passage — remained hidden in the uncharted center.

The disappearance of the Franklin expedition in the 1840s stunned the world and forced a sober reassess-



The "Gjoa" returns to Nome, Alaska, following its conquest of the Northwest Passage, 1906.

Roald Amundsen hoped that the Inuit of Gjoa Haven would endure beyond the reach of "civilization".

ment of arctic exploration. Was the ever-dimming possibility of a Northwest Passage worth the price, in lives or money? Very doubtful. So arctic voyages of the 1840s and 1850s turned their attention to the more pressing search for information about the Franklin tragedy.

Ten years passed before any clues turned up. Then, in 1854, Dr. John Rae found a few Franklin relics and heard tales about the disaster from some Inuit he met on King William's Land. The long silence, during which at least 14 expeditions had searched the area, tells much about the sparse and nomadic population — the paths of aborigine and explorer had not crossed in those ten years.

When the McClintock expedition of 1857-59 confirmed Rae's findings, King William's Land enjoyed brief notoriety as the island where most of Franklin's men had perished; then it faded into the arctic mists for another 40 years.

The Franklin searchers also verified that King William's Land was really an island and Simpson Strait, between island and mainland, was the key to the long-sought passage through the Arctic Archipelago. But this shallow, narrow, rock-walled and ice-bound route was not navigated by Europeans until 1905, when a small Norwegian expedition passed through the narrow strait and gave the island known as King William's Land a lasting place in arctic history.

The *Gjöa* was a single-masted, 42-ton Norwegian fishing sloop with a 13-horsepower motor and a seven-man crew led by Captain Roald Amundsen. To finance his Northwest Passage venture, Amundsen contracted to collect detailed data on the magnetic north pole. So the ship and its crew stayed in a small, protected bay on the southeast coast of King William Island from October 1903 to August 1905 while making the required observations. Amundsen named the site Gjöahavn and described it as "the finest little harbour in the world."

In striking contrast to most earlier Arctic voyages, Amundsen and his men remained comfortable and healthy during their stay at Gjöahavn, largely because he followed the example of men like Charles Hall, Dr. John Rae, and Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka who had wisely rejected European methods in favour of Inuit survival techniques.

Fortunately, some Inuit families were camped nearby when the *Gjöa* arrived. Nomads and Norwegians recognized that each had much to offer the other and soon became good friends. The visitors acquired Inuit clothing, traded regularly with native hunters for fresh meats, and adopted native hunting and fishing techniques. The natives acquired useful metal objects such as pots and needles, and plenty of wood to make handles for things like knives and harpoons.

In his records of the voyage Amundsen wrote a vivid, sympathetic account of these friendly and helpful people, concluding with the statement "My sincerest

wish for our friends the Nechilli Eskimo is, that civilization may never reach them."

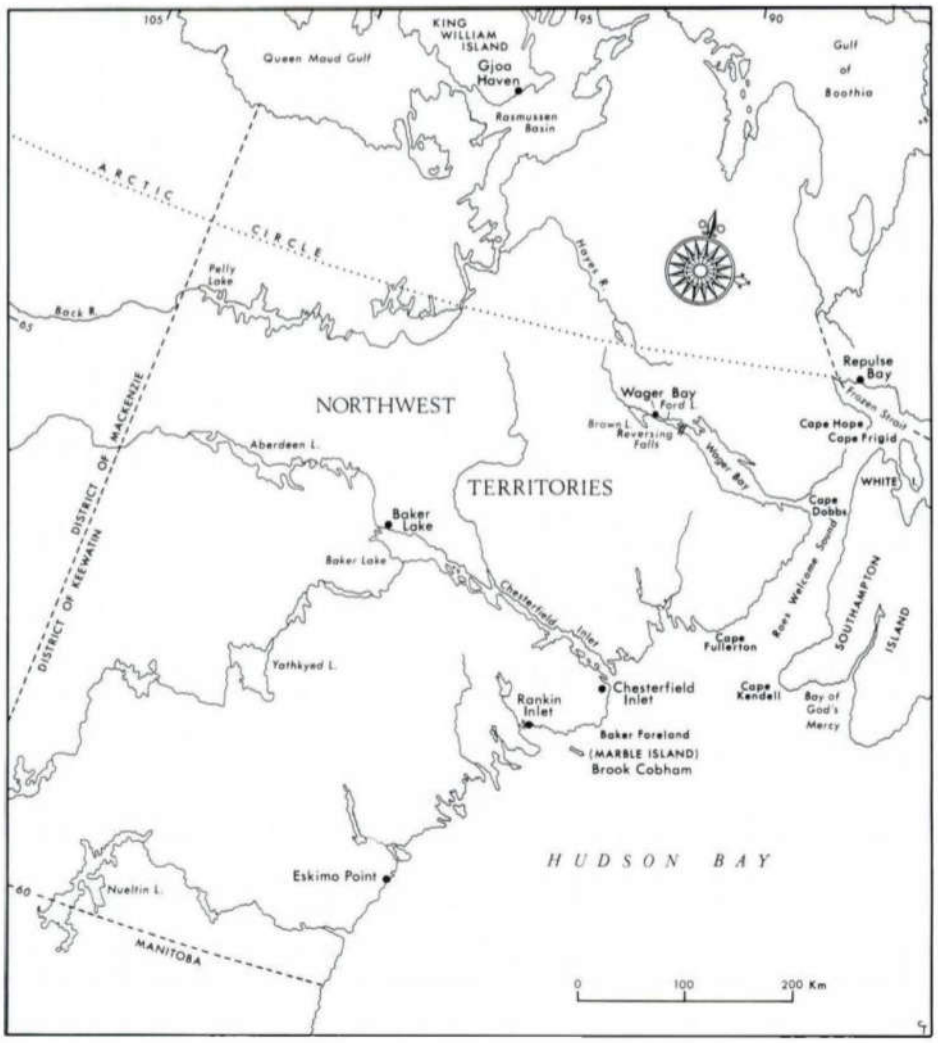
A commendable, but unrealistic, sentiment, for this visit was inevitably a turning point for the Inuit of the Central Arctic — never again could their lives be exactly the same. They recognized this, even if Amundsen chose not to. Tradition tells us that one of their elders, watching the *Gjöa* sail away, said:

> I'm sorry to see them go. Yet somehow . . . I don't think this will be the last big ship I see. And then as I turn and look again at my people returning to their tents and gathering their spears for the hunt, I ask myself, "What will it all mean to our future — our way of life?"

No one lived permanently on King William Island although small bands of Inuit travelled across it periodically, routes and camps determined by weather and hunting. In the 1840s, when they happened upon Franklin's abandoned ships off the west coast of the island, the doomed vessels became treasure troves of desirable items until nothing useful remained, or the sea poured in. Subsequently, a few trade items filtered through to them from whalers that plied the waters of the Eastern and Western Arctic.

Amundsen's visit was their first sustained contact with Europeans and their first chance to acquire a lasting supply of metal and wood. The new materials were valued for their labour-saving qualities but were used for traditional objects and occupations, making no substantive difference in the Inuit way of life.

But the Norwegians lit a little spark that did not die. It smoldered quietly until fanned into flame about 20 years later by Hudson's Bay Company traders, responding to a growing demand for the pelt of the Arctic fox.

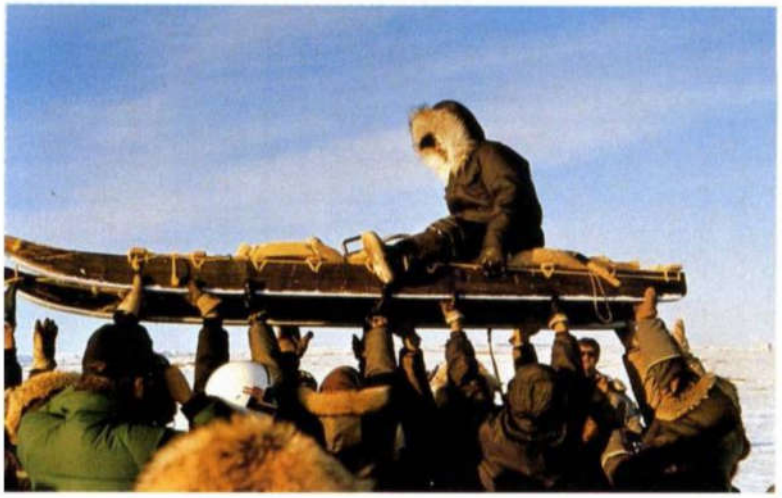


Gjoa Haven, oasis in a frozen desert. Airplanes, which first began to make visits in the 1930s, now form an essential link with the outside world.

Sled dogs patiently await their next journey. A musk-ox pelt is drying in the background.

Memorial at Gjoa Haven to Paddy Gibson, HBC man and arctic historian.

The winner of a 70 kilometre dog team race from Gjoa Haven to the Hovgaard Islands is carried in triumph by his friends.



Four Gjoa Haven children at their school picnic.

Contestants in a bannock-making competition await the signal to start cooking.

Box-sled, snowmobiles, fish spear and sewage truck are common sights in this place of many contrasts.

William "Paddy" Gibson, a popular figure who was widely mourned after his early death in a 1942 plane fire.

The fur business was sharing in the euphoria (and profits) of the 1920s when the Company opened its first two posts in the Central Arctic in 1923 — one at Cambridge Bay on Victoria Island and one near Douglas Bay on the south coast of King William Island. Why at these particular sites? Neither was a traditional Inuit gathering place nor in a productive resource area. Probably the sheltered harbours were a primary consideration. Lack of people and resources in the immediate area would not deter the Company's sanguine administrators, confident that their post would soon attract people and furs from surrounding areas. And they were right, although the hunters and trappers came only for trade and short visits for many years.

Cambridge Bay, the more accessible of the two, soon became the base of operations for traders in the Central Arctic. One of the posts it supplied was the one on King William Island, where William "Paddy" Gibson took over from Peter Norberg in 1925. Two years later the post was relocated a few miles east, to the harbor where the *Gjöa* had sheltered 24 years earlier and where the hamlet of Gjoa Haven now overlooks the little bay. Gibson was a competent and popular post manager and a dedicated arctic traveller, researcher and writer. When he died in a plane fire in 1942, aged 44, he was mourned by Inuit and Qallunaat (the Inuit name for "southerners") throughout the Central Arctic.

The Canalaska Trading Company also opened a post at Gjoa Haven in the 1920s. This competition probably helped to support prices paid locally for furs during the 1930s, thereby indirectly benefitting the Inuit who came to Gjoa Haven to trade. It was a very lean decade for the fur trade business. Canalaska held on until 1938, then sold out to the larger company. Of 35 Western and Central Arctic posts opened by the company before 1940, only nine were operating at the end of that year.

The Inuit welcomed the trading posts as sources of food and goods beyond what could be attained from their limited and fickle environment, but to take advantage of this they had to change their pattern of living. They began hunting and trapping more intensively, for trade as well as subsistence; they replaced spears and harpoons with rifles, effective but wasteful and expensive; and they altered their annual migrations to include a stop at Gjoa Haven at least once a year, often more.

There was still no role for cash in this isolated world, but an Inuk's credit or debit balance with the trader became an important fact to be reckoned with — a strong incentive to step up the pace of trade-oriented activities and depend on the post's supplies to fill gaps in subsistence needs.

The tiny building and its post manager picked up where Amundsen and the *Gjöa* left off and set in motion a string of events that would slowly but irrevocably bring extensive change to Canada's last frontier.

For some reason — probably isolation and climate, lack of exploitable resources, sparse population — the forces of change that usually followed fast on the heels of the Hudson's Bay Company were unusually slow to come to Gjoa Haven. By 1961, 34 years after the Company arrived, the permanent population was only 98 persons. However, government programs such as family allowance and housing assistance became strong incentives, during the 1960s, for exchanging the traditional nomadic lifestyle for a more sedentary one. The population almost tripled, to 278, by 1971.

The traditional triumvirate of arctic settlements — traders, missionaries, police — was not complete in Gjoa Haven until 1979, when the hamlet finally acquired its own one-man RCMP detachment. Meanwhile, some other agents of change had arrived:

1947 — An annual visit by a doctor.
1948 — Family allowance program.
1951 — Oblate Fathers.
1955 — Construction began on nearby DEW Line installation.
1956 — Anglican mission.
1962 — Federal government day school.
— First government-assisted houses (2).
1966 — Kekertak Co-op.
1969 — Nursing station.
1971 — Election of local councils.
1977 — Community votes to ban alcoholic beverages.

Today, 67 years after that first trading post opened on King William Island, the Inuit of Gjoa Haven have

a lifestyle that is both modern and traditional. Old ways and new ways exist side by side, sometimes in harmony, sometimes not, offering a rare glimpse of culture change in process.

Although they can now buy canned, packaged, and frozen foods, even some so-called "fresh' produce, most men still hunt and fish for a good part of their family's diet. They head out across the ice with empty sleds, and return a day to a week later, sleds heaped with caribou or seal, depending on the season. A wolf will be shot if seen, for dog food and pelt, but not deliberately hunted.

Nearby lakes still provide lots of fish and wildfowl in the summer, and most meals include greasy, delicious bannock and sugared tea. These last two items, though introduced by traders, were quickly adopted as essential parts of the Inuit diet.

The eerie husky howls confirm that dog teams are another persistent tradition in Gjoa Haven. These animals, pegged out in a row along the shore or ravine, are well cared for but never pampered; they are working partners, not pets, in a land where an unforgiving environment set no-nonsense limits on sentimentality long ago.

For some years the use of dog teams declined in Gjoa Haven, replaced by the new and popular snowmobile. Now this trend is reversing as costs of vehicles, fuel, and parts skyrocket, while reliability plummets.

Sleds, whether powered by motors or dogs, are still the basic mode of transport in this roadless region. In many ways the traditional power source is still the most efficient, given the climate, terrain, and isolation. Dogs can pull up to three times as much as a snowmobile can. They are lighter, and so are able to go where motorized vehicles cannot go, such as to the edge of ice floes for seal hunting. They "start" no matter what the weather, and cope better with pressure ridges and other surface irregularities. Their food (raw meat) is more available and certainly costs less than gas. Obtainable en route, it frees the space and weight alloted to fuel containers on a snowmobile-powered sled. The fact that dog teams are slower is not a major problem among people who have, so far, avoided becoming slaves to time.

Dog teams are also an important asset for Gjoa Haven's infant tourist industry. Hunters, naturalists, and other curious people who may visit the remote Central Arctic will go there to see and experience that extraordinary region, its animals and birds, its delicate plants, and they must travel by sled to do this. Who would choose to sit behind the noisy, noxious exhaust of a snowmobile if they could, instead, sit behind a team of huskies, inhaling the clear Arctic air and hearing only the campanionable creak of harness and swoosh of sled runners on cold-crisp snow?

Gjoa Haven guides have taken a few groups of hunters and sightseers out by dog team on trips ranging from a day up to two weeks. Everything is provided for the visitors' comfort and safety, even caribou clothing made by local women. Some houses are built or tents raised each night, depending on season and weather, and fresh meat or fish is cooked and served with bannock and sweet tea. Dave Upton, Economic Development Officer, and Luke Coady, Renewable Resources Officer, predict more demand for such excursions as word spreads about this unique and little-known region.

Upton is also encouraging talented men and women to use traditional skills to produce marketable art objects, and much of their work is selling well.

Three times a year (spring, summer, and winter) the hamlet of Gjoa Haven stages a few days of games, occasions that are full of examples of tradition and innovation existing side by side. In the spring, for example, there are events featuring dog teams and skidoos, harpoons and rifles, raw caribou and hot tea. Clothing, of participants and spectators, ranges from caribou parkas and sealskin kamiks to Mother Hubbard parkas and rubber boots, ski jackets and runners. The style and spirit of the games is entirely Inuit — informal, unscheduled and fun for everyone.

The Arctic Games are totally different. Modelled after a Qallunaat pattern, they are highly competitive and organized, with a limited number of selected, skilled participants from different Arctic regions.

Satellite TV has come to Gjoa Haven, bringing entertainment such as episodes of *The Golden Girls* and *Bob Newhart* into every home, but the effect on language is difficult to assess.

English is still a second language for most people who speak it at all. Inuktitut is the language of choice for most people, spoken on the local radio station and in most everyday conversations. Only where English is required, such as at the school or in a government office, is it spoken regularly.

Signs and notices around the community are printed in English and Inuktitut syllabics, a system of writing originally developed by missionaries and now used throughout much of the Arctic. The federal government recognizes Inuktitut with a trilingual sign at the Gjoa Haven airport.

The Government of Canada has tried, persistently but not very successfully, to impose a basic change in lifestyle on the Arctic aborigines. Government records show that this has happened, that everyone is neatly residing in one community or another, but appearances are deceptive. The Inuit are still nomads at heart.

At Gjoa Haven, for example, people come and go all year, heading out across the ice and frozen snow in their sleds — to hunt, visit, quarry soapstone, or just to recapture the rich satisfaction of skimming over

their vast frozen universe. Perhaps they will stop for awhile to jig for fish through a quickly-cut ice hole, or put up a tent and make a steaming pot of tea. They may be away for a few hours, days, or weeks.

With the first hint of Arctic spring this wanderlust quickens. Whole families prepare to abandon winter quarters in town and move to summer camps before ice breaks up and travel becomes more difficult. In these camps hard work alternates with visiting and tea drinking as men, women and children shed the restrictions of houses, jobs, and school and enjoy a return to more traditional tasks and lifestyle.

From the lakes and rivers close to the camps larders are filled with fish during July and August. In September the camps are staging areas for summer caribou hunts, when the animals are fat and their pelts especially fine. Countless strips of meat and fish hang drying in the long hours of summer sunshine. Hides are cleaned and scraped and made ready for autumn sewing.

This summer exodus presents many families with hard choices between old ways and new pressures — between their cherished summers on the land and the demands of employer or school.

Men and women with steady employment often compromise, moving their family to a camp close to town for the summer so the worker can become an Arctic commuter on Skidoo or Honda. Families without such ties to town generally leave earlier, go farther, and stay away longer. Their freedom is envied, but the income from a regular job (there are far too few for the population) is becoming ever more important as the consumer society moves in.

For families with children in school, a traditional summer "camp out" doesn't fit into the two-month school break, and school attendance rates suffer. Many people here still have grave doubts that the hours spent in class have any practical value for their children. They are not convinced that the few who have persevered at school, since it opened in 1962, are much better off than the many who have not, so school remains low on their list of priorities. One reason is the Qallunaat educational system itself. School buildings, classrooms, regular hours and days of instruction are incompatible with Inuit custom, where knowledge and skills are passed on informally and intermittently, from father to son, mother to daughter.

One fundamental cultural difference, leading to many misunderstandings between Inuit and Qallunaat, is a very different conception of time and its use. Qallunaat live according to a clock and a preconceived schedule of activities. To Inuit, this is an alien idea. They are alert and responsive to changing seasons and the extremes of daylight that characterize their world, but they are indifferent to a 24-hour clock or a five-day work week.

This indifference is not capriciousness or irresponsibility; it has a rational basis. For example, turning "day" into "night" during summer is a practical response to environmental facts. When the summer sun is nearest the horizon, the ice is firmer for traveling, the hunting and fishing are better, and insects are less voracious. So summer's chores — obtaining, preparing, and drying the winter food supply — are done from late in the "day" (4 or 5 o'clock) until about 7 a.m., which then becomes bedtime. As Eunice Panigayak says, "What difference does it make?" When she and husband Isaac and their children return to Gjoa Haven in August, they turn their day around again to conform to Qallunaat custom.

But conforming doesn't mean she agrees that hours and activities need to be so rigidly scheduled. It means that Eunice and Isaac are among those who believe in the new educational system, and have chosen to modify their preferred lifestyle so their children can go to school regularly.

The aboriginal people of King William Island are trying to cope with changes by accepting useful innovations that can be assimilated into their traditional lifestyle without too much disruption, while resisting changes that threaten basic concepts and values.

The spark of change that the fur traders fanned into flame in the 1920s has become a conflagration, but it's still under control because these friendly, unassuming people have a quiet strength beneath their benign exterior, a firm determination to make their own choices about their own future. Perhaps this stems from the demands of traditional Inuit life, where each family was effectively a self-sustaining unit whose survival depended on sound judgment and independent action. Perhaps it is a legacy of their prolonged and extreme isolation. In any case, they are cautious about exchanging time-tested traditions for an unfamiliar new lifestyle. Caution is wise. If they continue to move slowly and keep traditional values strong and vital in the face of so much pressure to change, all Canadians will benefit. ◆

Writer Thelma Landon lives in Victoria, B.C.

Undefeated: Part III

'Painting the Vision'

By J.M. MacDonald

Morning arrived with blustery rain, that autumn day in 1907, and William Asham's day staged an equally dour beginning. At eleven in the morning there was a meeting scheduled on the St. Peter's Indian Reserve north of Winnipeg, and Asham was nervous about the meeting's agenda.

Asham was a full-blooded Ojibwa, but as one who had studied the English language under the missionaries, he had some knowledge of the subtle and sometimes frightening machinations of white society. The St. Peter's Reserve consisted of 48,000 acres of river frontage and fine agricultural land just north of Winnipeg, and the Dominion government had been trying to persuade the Ojibwa to surrender the reserve and move to another site. Most of the Ojibwa were firmly opposed to any idea of a land surrender, but the current chief and council had come out in favour of it. And Asham was mystified as to their motives.

By mid-morning the government negotiators arrived at a small schoolhouse on the Reserve. Present were various Indian Affairs bureaucrats, a chief justice, some businessmen from the nearby town of Selkirk, and a milling crowd of 200 Ojibwa, many of whom could not squeeze into the schoolhouse and were obliged to stand outside. As the meeting began, the government proposed that the St. Peter's Reserve be surrendered in exchange for $5,000 and a reserve further north.

The Chief and Council supported the proposal, and Asham was angered when he finally discovered the reason. Later, in a letter to Ottawa, he described their motives: "One proposition was . . . the Chief would receive 180 acres of land and each Councillor 120, and each Indian would receive only 16 acres. I immediately demanded the reason why the Chief and Councillors should receive more land than the ordinary Indian. Mr. Pedley [Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs Frank Pedley] replied that they were getting the extra land for their recognition. I replied that they were not entitled to one acre more land than the ordinary Indian would receive but as the agreement of surrender was already prepared there was no change made. I further declared that at least two-thirds of the Indians present did not understand the conditions as stated."

Most of the Ojibwa did not speak English, so Asham translated the proceedings as well as he could, passing information through a window to the crowd outside. Asham demanded that band members be allowed to vote on the issue, and the government team decided to adjourn the meeting. On Tuesday, negotiations continued. According to Asham's letter, he was approached by a Member of Parliament, S.J. Jackson, who attempted to buy him off with an offer of land equal to that given to the Chief and Council. Asham refused.

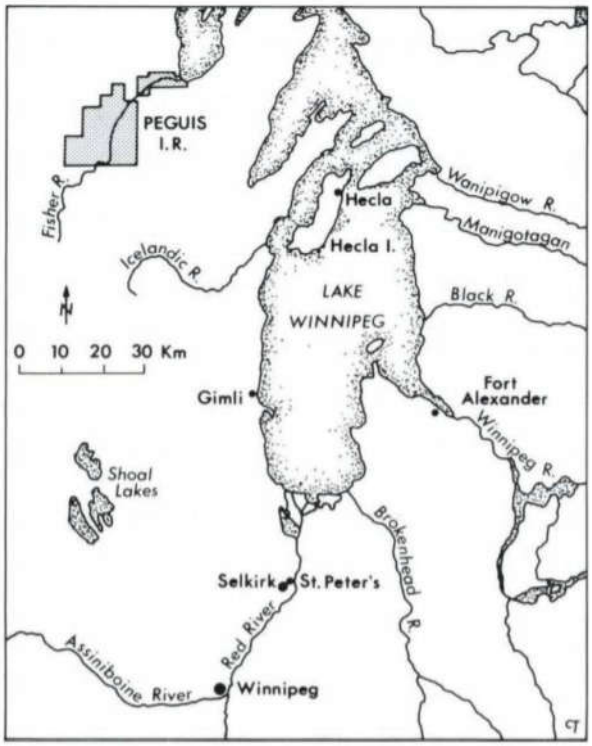
"I declared that if I had agreed I would have felt that I would be accepting a bribe to desert my friends."

The negotiating team finally assented to a vote. The chairman of the negotiators, Mr. Pedley, displayed a satchel containing $5,000. Reverend John Semmons, an Indian agent, Methodist missionary and land speculator, spoke loudly in Cree. "All you that want $90 go to this side" (indicating where the Chief and Councillors were standing). "The others go to the opposite side."

Asham did not like the way the vote was introduced but he and Semmons began to count the votes on the "nay" side. When he was finished he moved to the other side. The government officials stopped him, explaining that the "yes" votes had been already counted. Asham was taken aback. "I did not know who counted the other side, and they claimed they had a majority of seven. I was astonished to hear this, and sized up the two sides and satisfied myself that there were a larger number standing on my side."

Asham further protested that the Indians did not understand what they had voted for. He argued that Semmons should have said "you that *want to surrender* the Reserve go to one side, and you that don't want to surrender the Reserve go to the other."

Asham's protests were overruled. The money was distributed, and the Ojibwa realized that, in exchange for a couple of dollars per acre and a piece of unseen bush a hundred miles to the north at Fisher River they had sold their homes.



After the events of 1907, many of the St. Peter's Ojibwa trekked north from their old reserve on the Red River near Selkirk to the new Peguis Reserve on the Fisher River, far up Lake Winnipeg. The Ojibwa, who had been model agriculturalists, found rocky ground at their new home.

The transfer of the St. Peter's Reserve to real estate speculators became a matter of controversy in Ottawa. Shouting matches and accusations of cruel fraud are recorded through 53 pages of Hansard, but the treaty was already signed and the government declined to investigate. Supervised by the Department of Indian Affairs, the Ojibwa were herded onto a pair of steamships and transported north.

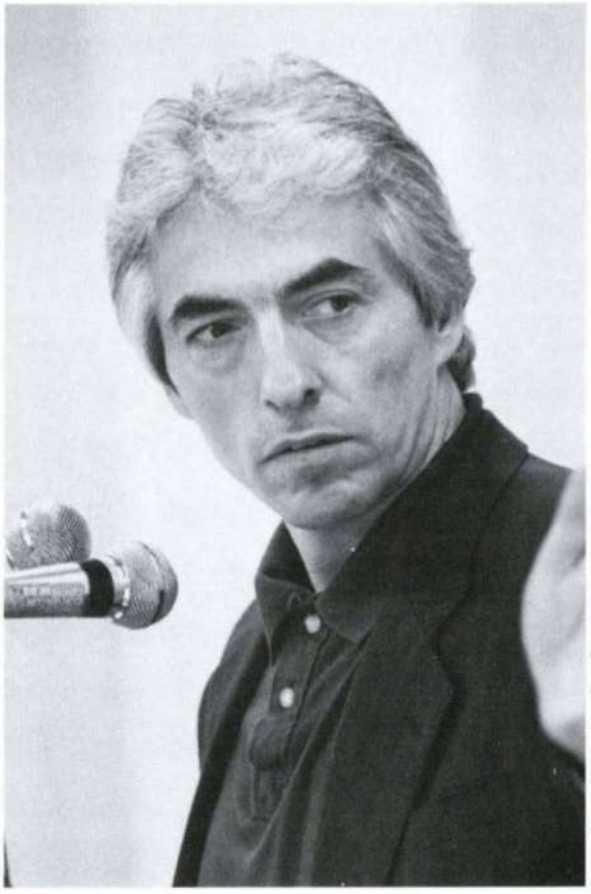
(The surrender was declared invalid in 1911 by the St. Peter's Indian Reserve Commission, composed of three Country Court judges, on the grounds that certain statutory provisions had been overlooked. The Commission was ignored).

At first glimpse their new home must have been a discouraging sight — stony land, stunted poplar bush, and not a building, road or field in sight. Setting up a tent village, the Ojibwa got down to work, hacking at the scrawny poplars to build cabins before the cold weather arrived. In honour of the man who had been such a friend of Manitoba's white community, the expanse of scrubby bush was named the Peguis Indian Reserve.

The Indian Reserve system was considered to be a great success by everyone except those affected by it. With the extermination of the buffalo the Ojibwa lost their economic base, and had nothing to trade but skills that were becoming obsolete. Poor and desperate, they were now eyed with suspicion by white immigrants. The reserve system allowed police and government officials to monitor Indians more effectively. Reserves also removed Indians from the sight and conscience of white society, and allowed settlers to exploit their lands without interference.

The maintenance of Indian reserves was costly, however, and like most superficial "fixes", it required continued attention as the price tag rose. By the late 1950s, the Indian Affairs bureaucracy had expanded from a handful of agents to 3,500 full time employees. During the 1950s federal expenditures for Indian schooling grew from $7.4 million to $27.7 million. In the years before 1950, the Indian Affairs Branch built a grand total of 494 houses on behalf of Saskatchewan Indians. In the years 1961-1970 the same department built 2,224 houses. Federal policy-makers justified rising expenditures by arguing that reserves were a temporary phase, and that the long-term assimilation of Indians was the final objective. In 1961, an official Indian Affairs Branch publication confidently

Manitoba Grand Chief Phil Fontaine is in the forefront of the struggle to put Indian affairs in Indian hands.



Wayne Glowacki/Winnipeg Free Press

Hudson's Bay Company Archives

School days seem joyless for these Ojibwa residential school children of the 1920s.

explained that "Indian culture will inevitably be absorbed by ours, but it will never be forgotten, and the Indian contribution to our civilization will remain of great value."

The cutting edge of the IAB's policy of assimilation was the residential school system. Children were taken from the reserve at six years of age and placed in military-style institutions, where they were scrubbed, schooled and encouraged to behave like model white children. Routinely punished for speaking native languages, children were kept away from their families for up to eight months at a time. Phil Fontaine, 45 years of age, is a Saulteaux (Plains Ojibwa) who grew up in the residential school system. "The legacy of the residential schools," he says, "is a generation of children who were raised with no family life. Children learn how to be parents from their own parents. The residential schools took that away from us. They might have believed they were doing the right thing, but it was an experiment. And it created tragic results."

Those tragic results have been documented at great length. If the stated goal of government was to induct natives into white society, the unstated motive must have been to relinquish responsibility for the hundreds of millions of dollars pumped into Indian programming. By the 1960s, the Federal Government was showing signs of wanting to phase out of its traditional relationship with aboriginals. In 1960, Treaty Indians were given the right to vote. In 1961 a Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Affairs issued recommendations advocating increased autonomy for Indian Bands. "Government should direct more authority and responsibility to Band Councils and individual Indians," the report stated, hinting that the Federal Government had its eye on the exit. With this greater autonomy there would come "a consequent limitation of ministerial authority and control." In 1969, the much-publicized "New Policy" proposed to repeal the Indian Act and terminate the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Winnipeg Free Press

Elijah Harper says "no" to the Meech Lake Accord, Manitoba Legislature, June 1990.

Indians wanted the government to get out of their affairs too, but they wanted it done on their own terms. "Our view," says Lyle Longclaws, "is that the Canadian Government has a permanent obligation to the native people whose land they occupy. We don't want more, we just want to retain the annual budget accorded to the Department of Indian Affairs, and we want to manage those funds ourselves".

Longclaws is typical of many energetic young natives who returned to reserves after being educated in white society. Instead of assimilating, many used their experience to manipulate the system on behalf of the native agenda. "We went to Indian Affairs and said 'We want to run our own school'," says Phil Fontaine, who returned home to the Fort Alexander reserve in Manitoba after residential school and university. "They resisted us at first, but we said 'We're doing it.' We built our own school, hired our own teachers, and planned our own curriculum. You have to understand that we had a school system, then, that never graduated an Indian student from Grade Twelve. We had difficulty at first, but this year Fort Alexander school graduated twenty-five students from Grade Twelve, and that's a tremendous achievement."

Other reserves were making the same transition. Just as the residential schools were the leading edge of the federal assimilation effort, locally controlled Indian schools cut the path for self government on reserves across Western Canada. On the Waywayseecappo Reserve in Western Manitoba, Saulteaux children had always gone to school in Rossburn, where they normally entered a low-achievement program then dropped out after several years. No native students had ever graduated from grade twelve at Rossburn. Lyle Longclaws was one of the individuals working to take over the school system there. "We knew that aboriginal kids flunked out because everyone expected them to," he says. "We wanted to turn around so that the kids had a strong sense of where they'd come from, and where they are going."

Waywayseecappo School is a large metal building that looks more like a stock barn than a school. But inside, enormous wall murals, children's art, Indian artifacts, and dignified portraits of Saulteaux elders create an atmosphere of pride and celebration. "We call this 'Painting the Vision'," says Lyle Longclaws. "It's a way of teaching our kids about their fabulous history. The old system moved kids from residential school to foster homes to jail to penitentiary. The only way an Indian could attract any money in the old system was to get into trouble. An Indian worth a few hundred dollars as a foster kid pulled down fifty thousand dollars a year worth of services in the penitentiary. With our new schools, we want to spend a little money at the front end, and intercept those kids before they enter the treadmill."

In the halls of Waywayseecappo School there's a little photograph on the door of one student's locker. It's been scissored out of a newspaper and Scotch-taped to the metal door; a humble enough mounting but it's a little snapshot that "paints the vision", nevertheless. When Canada's First Ministers went through the bureaucratic hell of the Meech Lake negotiations in June, 1990, they left out one tiny detail. They forgot that Treaty Indians existed. They forgot furthermore, that Indians had won the right to vote, and that in Manitoba a small, quiet man was waiting for them, holding an eagle feather in his hands. On the student's locker door the little photograph shows the man's face: a Cree-Ojibwa face, wistful, patient, with a hundred years of sadness in the eyes.

But at the corner of Elijah Harper's mouth there is the slightest hint of something else: a look of triumph, the smile of someone who's been a long time travelling, and is glad to be coming back. ♦

(Series concluded)

J.M. MacDonald's article on the Chipewyan of Northern Manitoba appeared in the February/March 1987 issue of "The Beaver". A frequent contributor to magazines across Canada, Jake MacDonald has also published several collections of short stories and was a winner in this year's Western Magazine Awards.

Two Views of Western Canada

To See Ourselves

By Robin Fisher

BRITISH COLUMBIA
A History of the Province

By George Woodcock. Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver and Toronto, 1990. 288 pp., illus. $34.95.

ALBERTA
A New History

By Howard Palmer with Tamara Palmer. Hurtig Publishers, Edmonton, 1990. 422 pp., illus. $27.95.

While a general history of a province may not be the best place to find crackling new ideas about the past, the reader can expect a balanced account informed by the latest research of other historians. The author should explain the essential characteristics of the particular province: what makes it tick as a community and what sets it apart from others. Such histories are important. Because they reach a wider audience than more specialised books they influence how a province understands itself and how it is seen by others. Contrary to the views of some historians, these survey histories are not easy to pull off as these two very different examples clearly show.

George Woodcock's *British Columbia: A History of the Province* is the first one volume history since Margaret Ormsby's *British Columbia: A History* appeared in 1958. Woodcock is, as the jacket reminds us, "One of Canada's most respected men of letters" and so his book ought to be a major contribution to historical writing on the Pacific province. Alas, it is not. Woodcock may be a man of letters, but he is not an historian and he does not mind showing it.

This book presents an old fashioned view of British Columbia and in this sense is not much of an advance on Ormsby's history. It reflects the state of the historical literature twenty or thirty years ago. It places great emphasis, for example, on the years before British Columbia joined confederation. More than half of the book deals with the pre-1871 period which was

Amor De Cosmos:
Undeserved attention

the focus of historians a generation or two ago. Woodcock pays a great deal of attention to politics and the activities of white, male leaders. The eccentric Amor De Cosmos, about whom Woodcock has written a biography, is exaggerated out of all proportion to his actual importance. There is, by contrast, very little social history. The book is comparatively weak on the family, women, daily life and the workplace, just to take a few examples.

There is one area where Woodcock claims to be taking a new approach, but it turns out to be neither new or well sustained. In his introduction he makes much of the fact that he will deal more fully with native people than other historians. In support of his assertion that native people have been neglected by historians he cites Margaret Ormsby and Martin Robin. In fairness he might have noted that a number of scholars have written on British Columbia's first citizens since these works were published. Even better, he might have read some of these works and then he might have really done some justice to native people. As it is, there is the traditional emphasis on white explorers and traders in the early period and very little on the Indian's role in the fur trade and the extent to which they determined its patterns. Woodcock exaggerates the level of inter-racial violence during both the fur trade and the settlement phases while he largely ignores the much more important issue of native land rights until a section near the end of the book. Even then, I am sure that native people will be interested to learn they "never owned the land" (page 255). These days such comments cannot be excused as mere individual indulgence on the part of an author for it is amazing how quickly arrant nonsense can become accepted wisdom. Woodcock's uninformed view that one of the greatest problems for native people in British Columbia was they were too dependent on white society has already been cited with approval by Chief Justice Allan McEachern in his judgement on the Gitksan-We'suwet'en case. An author cannot be responsible, of course, for how others use his work, but he can be more careful about what he writes.

A major part of the problem with Woodcock's book is revealed in the bibliography. Though he includes the disclaimer that it is not complete and calls it a guide to further reading, it is nevertheless a listing of those books that Woodcock thinks are important. The authors not on the list read like a roll call of historians who have done significant work on British Columbia. To take a few examples: Warren Cook, Christon Archer, F.W. Howay (on the fur trade), James Gibson, Barry Gough, Robin Fisher, Rolf Knight, R.A.J. McDonald, all of Ormsby's articles, James Hendrickson, David Mitchell, Douglas Cole are all excluded. All of Woodcock's own books are in the bibliography of course and each rates more lengthy discussion in the introduction. This disdain for the work of others is unacceptable and, in this case, it is also disingenuous because there is evidence in the text that some of these authors have been used and then not acknowledged. There are no footnotes in this book and therefore no way to check the numerous facts and figures and, that too, is a problem in a volume that is factually unreliable.

Alberta: A New History is also the first survey for some time, the last being J.G. MacGregor's *A History of Alberta* which came out in 1972. Alberta, fortunately, is better served by the Palmers than British Columbia is by Woodcock. With the assurance of historians who know the literature, they provide a much more balanced account of Alberta's history. About half of the book deals with the period before World War I.

They also know that doing justice to a province's history is not just a matter of even courage over time. The Palmers deal in a much greater range of topics. They naturally begin with native people, and they do so without great fanfare simply because that is where the history of the province starts. Though leaders and politics are part of their history, we also hear about ordinary people. Outsiders often see Alberta as a relatively homogeneous society, yet this book emphasises the ethnic diversity of the province. At the same time, individuals do not disappear amidst the discussion of groups. There are biographical accounts of particular, representative personalities.

The Palmers' more complete and wide-ranging history does have its own drawbacks. Because they cover such a variety of topics nothing can be analysed in great depth. The reader is constantly moved on to something new. There are lots of short paragraphs and subheadings which also give the impression of choppiness. The tenor is partly inherent in the genre, though it could be avoided by more skillful writing and better transitions. Still, I prefer the Palmers' recognition of the complexity of Alberta's history to Woodcock's eccentric view of British Columbia.

Alberta: A New History is also technically superior. There is a useful bibliography of further reading for each chapter which draws the reader's attention to the best work of historians, rather than a few titles that occur to the author off the top of his head. The photographs are interspersed through the text and therefore related more closely to the words. Rather than putting the illustrations on stock paper, Douglas & McIntyre have persisted with the traditional signatures in the Woodcock book which does mean that the reproductions are better.

Moving from the particular to the general, neither one of these books offers sweeping and insightful conclusions on what is distinctive and essential about the two provinces. This is partly because both are rather inward-looking histories. Woodcock says that he is going to explain what is distinctive about British Columbia, but to do that the province needs to be seen more in its wider context. There is little sense of how British Columbia related to the continent, the ocean, the empire, and the nation of which it is a part. The Palmers provide general overviews of broad topics at the beginning of each chapter which are very helpful, but, they too, are cautious about larger generalisations. Having read these books you will have to draw your own conclusions on matters such as the similarities and differences between Canada's two westernmost provinces.

Robin Fisher is Professor of History at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia.

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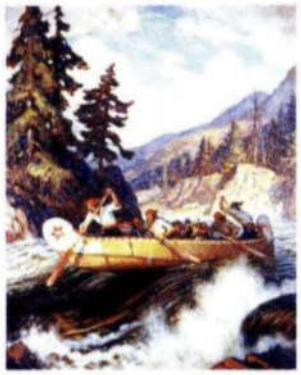

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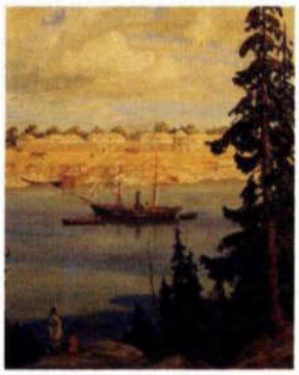

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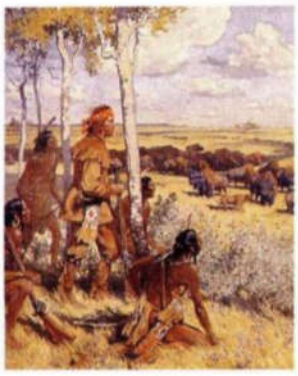

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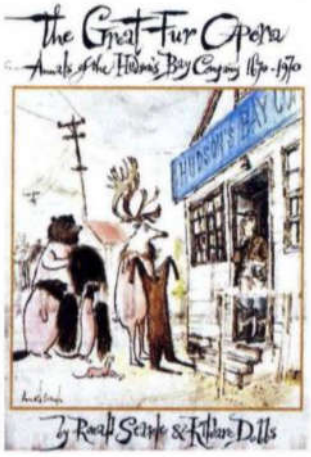

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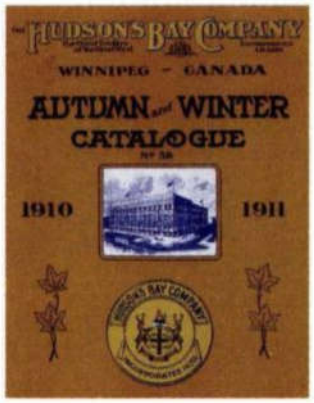

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The Chinese Ordeal

By Boyce Richardson

CHINATOWNS
Towns Within Cities in Canada

By David Cheunyan Lai. University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1988. 382pp., illus. $29.95.

There are two books within this one volume. One, that will be of most interest to geographers and planners, is an academic account of the development of Chinatowns in Canada, with an emphasis on Victoria. The other is a history of the Chinese people in Canada. The first of these is rather dry and precise, although interesting; the second is totally fascinating, an extraordinary story of rampaging mobs, hypocritical governments, racist institutions, and an entrenched, systematic hostility towards the Chinese that made itself felt from coast to coast, and lasted for decade after decade.

This story will be of interest not only to historians, but to the general public, to anyone, indeed, who cares at all about the quality of Canadian life today. It is the more remarkable because it is told with a complete lack of emotion, and without any discernible effort to win the sympathy of the reader. It is so flatly told, so matter-of-factly, that one cannot help but believe every word of it. The author doesn't romanticize the Chinese. He shows us their remarkable courage, determination and persistence, but does not hide their insularity and clannishness. Indeed, one of the most bizarre incidents in the book is his description of how in 1886 the Chinese people who had settled in Winnipeg, nearly all called Lee, from Chenshan village in Heshan county, went down to the railway station and beat up non-Heshan people arriving in the city, forcing them to continue their journey eastward, and somewhere else.

I finished the book feeling indebted to Mr. Lai for his 20 years of detailed research. His work has brought me information that I need to know about the history of my country, and that I am unlikely ever to find in history textbooks.

Of course, one knew that the Chinese were badly treated in their early years in Canada, and that this was unjust. The details, however, are quite agonizing. The first Chinese came with the gold rushes of the 1850s. They had no intention of staying, and many of them did, indeed, return either to China or the United States. Most came from 14 counties in the area of Canton and Hong Kong. The Chinese government of the time didn't want them to emigrate, but conditions were harsh there, and eventually many were able to make it out, hoping to earn enough in North America for the families they left behind to live on.

On the gold fields there was little discrimination against them, but when the rush was over, and Chinese began to collect in Victoria, the non-Chinese public began to get uneasy. In the economic recession following the gold rush, white workers began to feel that Chinese labourers, ranch hands and miners were threatening their jobs. Whipped up by some strongly prejudiced journalism, B.C. politicians in the 1870s disenfranchised the Chinese (along with the native Indians), and soon it was impossible for a white politician to make his way in B.C. if he did not speak out against Chinese labour.

Formal anti-Chinese organizations appeared, with working men among the most virulent. By 1878, under the Chinese Tax Act, every Chinese in B.C. was required to pay $40 tax a year, just for being Chinese, but the act was declared unconstitutional. Then at the urging of B.C. a House of Commons select committee in Ottawa suggested Chinese immigration should not be encouraged and Chinese labour should not be employed on Dominion public works.

The second wave of Chinese immigrants came to build the Cana-

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dian Pacific Railway. There were only 35,000 people in the province, and 10,000 workers were needed. Whites brought up from San Francisco proved to be of poor mettle, and the contractor found he could reduce his labour costs by $4 million by employing Chinese. Fifteen hundred were brought from the U.S., and another 2,000 shipped across from China. They came in such appalling conditions that nearly 10 per cent of them died soon after their arrival.

By 1882, 6,500 of the 9,000 labourers working on the line were Chinese. Hundreds of them died from accidents or illness, many from scurvy because of lack of vegetables. "When a worker was ill," comments Mr. Lai, "there was no doctor to treat him; when dead, he would be left by the railway and covered up with piles of rocks and earth. No coroner's inquest was held, as these deaths were never reported." It has been estimated that three Chinese workers died for every kilometre of track laid.

As Vancouver became a focus for Chinese settlement, prejudice sprang up there too. In 1887 Chinese were attacked in their homes by a mob of 300 after a public meeting. The book describes many such incidents, during which Chinese either barricaded themselves in their homes, or fled until things quietened down.

Chinatowns, of course, were never normal communities. The Chinese could not buy preferred plots of land, so they were forced to locate on the edges of Canadian towns, often on swampy, low-lying ground. The people were usually poor, could afford only small shacks, and were exploited by landlords, both Chinese and white. Few could speak English, and since they were shunned by white Canadians, they had no incentive to learn. When Chinese businessmen did begin to move out of their own community, they usually met special difficulties. Some of the discriminatory practices dreamed up were amazing. In 1912 the Saskatchewan legislature prohibited any Japanese, Chinese or other Oriental from employing any white woman or girl, and British Columbia and Ontario soon followed suit.

When the act was repealed in 1918 it was replaced by an act which required Chinese businessmen to obtain a special licence to hire a female. In Victoria, as Chinese established restaurants and grocery stores outside Chinatown, they were also forbidden (in 1932) to employ white women as waitresses.

Educational discrimination was a fact of life for decades. In 1907 the Victoria School Board ruled that Chinese children had to speak English before they could be admitted to public school, then that only native-born Chinese children were admissible, thus effectively depriving Chinese newly arrived from China of an education.

In 1908, in response to public worry about the moral effect of having white children mix with Chinese, a segregated school was set up, only for Chinese. By 1921, 250 Chinese children were segregated, but 150 were still mixed in classes with 6,000 white children in Victoria public schools. Agitators protested that "white children sitting side by side with Orientals tend to develop the idea of social equality"; so the school board decided to segregate all Chinese children, because they were a "health menace". When the board could not substantiate this charge, they announced instead that the Chinese were unable to speak perfect English, and were therefore retarding the whole class. In response, Chinese students went on strike for a whole year, after which they were re-admitted to their former schools.

I suppose some of this story is well known, at least in outline. In 1885 a head tax of $50 was imposed on every Chinese immigrant. It reached $500 in 1903. This did not stop them from coming, and by 1923 when there were about 40,000 Chinese in Canada (0.45 per cent of the population), the Canadian government bowed to the widespread fear and resentment felt against them, and passed an act prohibiting people of Chinese origin or descent from immigrating. This virtually stopped Chinese immigration until the act was repealed in 1947.

During all these years men were not able to bring their families to Canada (at first through poverty, later because of restrictions), so the imbalance between males and females for many years was as high as 23 to one (this imbalance has been overcome only in the last few years). Consequently, in 1884, for instance,

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a third of all Chinese women in Victoria were prostitutes. There were few families, and as the years passed with few additions to the working population from China, so some Chinatowns began to decline until they were little more than collections of old men.

These factors added to the negative stereotypes held of Chinatowns by whites: Chinatowns for years were regarded as mysterious, scary places, full of gambling and opium dens, insanity, filth and disease. Though this image was, for the most part, held by municipal councils, they never did anything to clean up or improve their Chinatowns. Until the 1960s, the municipal idea of cleaning up Chinatown was to raze its modest homes on the slightest excuse. Only in 1947 were Chinese given the vote in B.C. provincial elections, and thereafter, prejudice against them began to moderate.

I believe this history is an important one for all Canadians to know, especially since it is clear that Canada is going to have very many more Chinese and other Asians as immigrants in the future. Indeed, the story has what might be called a happy ending. Chinatowns may have been shunned and abhorred for many years in Canada, but in the last two decades they have been embraced and courted for the investment, jobs and opportunities they provide.

The latest figures given by the author indicate that the Chinese population of Canada grew by 50 per cent in the first years of the 1980s, and that substantial populations have grown in Toronto (143,000), Vancouver (109,000), and most of our other large cities. Fourteen Chinese have been appointed to the Order of Canada (including the author of this book, and he deserves it, I would say), and many have been elected to public office by the general population.

In short, the conditions exist in Canada for us to put this melancholy story of prejudice and racism behind us. The recent outbursts of racial prejudice, however, show us that if we are to continue to improve the social climate, we will all have to work at it: a tolerant community, living in racial harmony, is not established by accident. A good place to begin is with an understanding of our history. It is healthy that we should question our prevailing idea that we are a specially tolerant people. History does not bear that out.

David Chuenyan Lai has written an important book that will help us in our continuing effort to create a decent social climate in Canada.

Boyce Richardson is an Ottawa writer and filmmaker.

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THE PACKET

Letters, Notes and Opinion

'A Convincing Version of Events'

In J.M. Bumsted's excellent article on the tension between popular and academic historians, he implied that I resent "not being accepted as an academic scholar." [*The Beaver*, April/May 1991].

This is not true. The whole burden of my defence of popular history, as I have stated in the Foreword of each of my books, is that they are "journalist's works with no academic pretentions." The problem has been that my critics have deliberately ignored that disclaimer and viciously attacked my work by their standards, rather than mine.

Contemporary historians want to involve their readers' emotions as well as their intellects. The truth is not, as many academics believe, the sum of all the ascertainable facts. On his 77th birthday, A.J.P. Taylor, the British academic, noted that history is not a catalogue "but a convincing version of events." That is what popular historians attempt to achieve. And that means re-igniting the emotions of special moments — not merely recording their dates and factual details.

Once an event has happened, it can never be replayed. In compiling their diverse histories, journalists and academics are both faced with a welter of facts from which they must choose. That selection — the framework within which they write — requires interpretation, and interpretation implies a scale of values, a sense that some things matter more than others. In that context, popular historians will inevitably pick characters over circumstance. That's an essential distinction. It has always been my contention that any pivotal event can best be portrayed through the personalities of the dominant individuals involved, working out their peculiar fates.

The starting point of contemporary history should be to record and refine the memories of those who lived through large and small events — so claimed the wildlife artist and arctic explorer, the late H. Albert Hochbaum of Delta, Manitoba. Before he died in his late seventies he told me about having talked to his grandfather during the 1930s about events that had been witnessed by *his* grandfather in the eighteenth century. The history of modern Canada thus spanned only three memories — that's how young a country we are.

Popular historians attempt to recreate personalities and situations by applying literary techniques such as narrative, irony, suspense — all the devices that make for good novels except, of course, that they must remain strictly within the boundaries of fact. Stephen Shift recently wrote in the New York *Times*: "At the heart of good history is a naughty little secret: good storytelling. A history that isn't implicitly a colorful, twisty yarn is at best fodder for other specialists. A historian's richest insights generally come when he asks himself what it would have been like to have been there."

That quality certainly is essential to popular history. Yet such attempts are usually condemned by academics — usually but not always.

The late Donald Creighton, for many years head of the History Department at the University of Toronto and Sir John A. Macdonald's definitive biographer, was an avid supporter — and author — of readable history. He was often highly critical of his academic colleagues. "They are" he complained, "very likely to be imprisoned by the narrow bounds of their academic specialty and are indifferent to the literary quality, the arrangement and style of a book. Irony, narrative skill, character drive, descriptive or analytical power, mean little or nothing to them. They have spent long years grubbing in archives, libraries and government departments to produce a thesis to win a coveted doctoral degree. This prolonged struggle has deepened but drastically narrowed their interests."

Academics should at least try to recognize the relevance of the journalistic approach. Neither popular nor academic history is disposable. One is as incomplete as the other.

Peter C. Newman,
North Vancouver,
British Columbia.

Old Boy

I continue to enjoy The Beaver magazine — most of the articles I find very interesting.

As a Toronto resident, born and bred, and an Old Boy of Upper Canada College, I was very much aware of Alexander Dunn's V.C. awarded at the Charge of the Light Brigade. The V.C. hangs in the front hall at U.C.C.!

Gordon Waldie,
Toronto, Ontario.

The Gitksan and the Wet'suwet'en

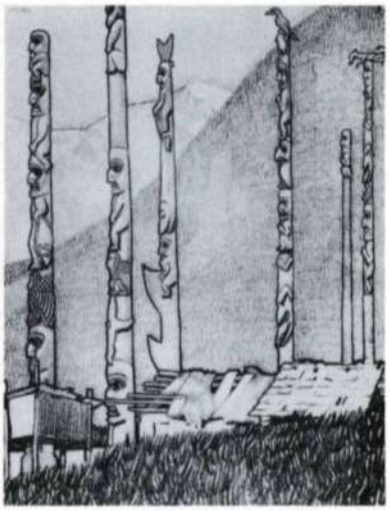
"Historians make history. other people just live," goes the graffito in the faculty washroom. But it is hardly true. Not only historians define what is significant in our past. Surprising people, people we would hardly think of as historians, constantly shape our historical sense.

For instance? Probably no recent statement about the history of British Columbia (and much else) has been so important as a four-hundred-page paperback with an ugly green cover that was published in Vancouver early in 1991. Its first paragraph announces its sweeping historical themes. "The last Great Ice Age, which lasted many thousands of years, covered nearly all of British Columbia," it begins. "It ended about 10,000 years ago."

From that beginning, the book goes on to discuss early explorers, the government of Sir James Douglas, the native lore of ada'ox and kungax, the Royal Proclamation of 1763, and many other weighty historical issues. The author promises he will not discuss "the fascinating questions of Viking or other Norse-type explorations on the north and east coasts of North America," but that is about the only limit he will accept.

The author of this work is Allan McEachern. By profession McEachern is a judge, the Chief Justice of British Columbia in fact, and officially his fat paperback is not a history text at all. It is his "Reasons for Judgment" in a B.C. Supreme Court case called "Delgam Uukw versus the Queen" — better known as the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en land claims case.

Judge McEachern explains the historical detail of his judgment by saying, "it is not possible to discuss this case except in an historical context." For anyone interested in how history is made, it is equally impossible not to see Judge McEachern's book as a demonstration of how history shapes our legal proceedings and legal rulings interpret history.



Gitksan totem poles, 1924.

The Judgment Of History

The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en live among the mountains along the upper reaches of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers of northwestern British Columbia. The Gitksan speak a language of the west-coast Tsimshian family. The Wet'suwet'en, who until recently would have been called "Carriers", are the westernmost speakers of the Athabaskan group of languages spoken in much of the northern interior of British Columbia, the Prairies, and the Northwest Territories. The have long been close neighbours with a generally similar way of life. Like most West Coast people, they made salmon their staff of life and cedar the essential material in which they work.

In 1984 about fifty of the hereditary chiefs of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en launched a court action claiming "ownership and jurisdiction" of their traditional territories, a 57,000 square kilometre area slightly larger than Nova Scotia. The land at stake included precious timber and fishing resources, the towns of Smithers, Burns Lake, and Hazleton, and many Indian reserves. About 6,000 Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en live in the territory, along with 30,000 non-natives. When the case began, the Gitksan name and chieftainship of Delgam Uukw, the first named of the plaintiffs, was held by Albert Tait. By 1991, the name had passed down to two successors, first Ken Muldoe and then Earl Muldoe, each of whom had held the traditional death feast (potlatch, we might say) to honour his late predecessor, take over the name, and validate his right to the title.

Both native history and Canadian history were at issue in the court case. It is a fact of Canadian history that most of Canada is covered by treaties in which native bands, willingly or not, ceded title over the land to the British Crown or its Canadian representatives. In most of British Columbia, by contrast, no treaties were ever negotiated. The absence of treaties raises a question that has nagged at British Columbia for more than a century. Without

a treaty, has the land ever become Canada's?

The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en chiefs were willing to acknowledge the underlying sovereignty of Canada. Their fundamental challenge was to British Columbia and to the province's right to enforce provincial law upon the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en people. The chiefs insisted that, in the absence of treaties, the province had no grounds for infringing on their inherited rights and powers. Chiefs had asserted that claim for a century, in fact, but by the 1980s it had become urgent: logging companies with provincial licenses were clearcutting much of the timber on the territory in question.

Proving Nationhood

During the trial, Judge McEachern heard much more than the history of land treaties or the lack of them. To demonstrate "ownership and jurisdiction" over their land, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en chiefs had to show the court that they had always lived there and that they had governed and controlled by recognized laws and institutions. In effect, Canadian law challenged the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en to prove they were nations.

To prove their nationhood, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en chiefs called on a stream of witnesses. Historians quoted the documents of the earliest white fur traders. Anthropologists brought in their field notes on Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en society. Tribal chiefs and elders recounted lore and law passed down by generations of their clans. Even a paleobotanist came forward with technical evidence to show that a certain landslide — which may figure in a traditional Gitksan story — occurred more than three thousand years ago. It all took years and cost perhaps $20 million.

Anyone with an interest in history might think such evidence was hardly necessary. British Columbia writers as varied as Roderick Haig-Brown, George Woodcock, Hilary Stewart, and Wilson Duff have celebrated the pre-contact peoples of British Columbia's densely populated Northwest Coast for their complex societies, elaborate political organizations, sophisticated art traditions, and lavish ceremonials. "With the resources they had and the way they used them," says Terry Glavin, a journalist who covered the case, "there's really no doubt that before contact the people here had a standard of living that probably exceeded that of most of the people living in Europe at the same time." Bill Reid's art, George Clutesi's writing, even the decision to recreate a Northwest Coast village as the centrepiece of the Great Hall of Canada's new Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec — all testify to the enduring influence of the civilizations of the coast.

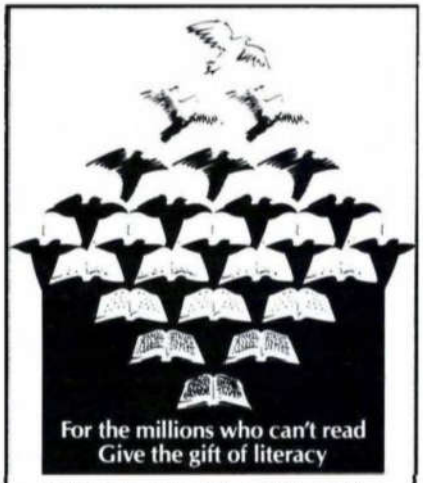
To evaluate the evidence put before him, Judge McEachern had to be as much historian as judge, but his conclusion hardly reflected the historical consensus. He appreciated the testimony of the historians who testified, but he found the anthropologists both difficult to understand and biased, and he refused to believe much of their testimony. And in the end, he was not much impressed with the life and culture of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en people.

Laws and Customs

"I am quite unable to say that there was much in the way of pre-contact social organization among the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en," wrote Judge McEachern. He declared their laws and customs do not "permit a finding that they or their ancestors governed the territory according to aboriginal laws." He saw in their territory "a vast emptiness." In a phrase that has already become famous, he misquoted Thomas Hobbes to declare that aboriginal life on the Northwest Coast was quite simply "nasty, brutish, and short."

These were strong and startling historical opinions, but in the end Judge McEachern's crucial ruling was more legal than historical. "It is the law," he declared, "that aboriginal rights exist at the 'pleasure of the Crown' and they may be extinguished whenever the intention of the Crown to do so is clear and plain." Land treaties and their absence, in other words, are quite irrelevant, and so are the historical achievements of native societies. It is the law in Canada, McEachern found, that the rights of native nations, no matter how old or elaborate, are eliminated simply by the wish of the Crown to do so.

Since the judge decided that B.C. had indeed intended to extinguish aboriginal title, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en lost their case. Judge



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McEachern dismissed their claim. The honour of the Crown, he ruled, obliged B.C. to permit the natives to use the land for traditional food gathering and ceremonies, but only when it was not needed for other purposes. That was the extent of the native interest he acknowledged in B.C. land.

Judge McEachern stressed that judges are bound by the law and cannot simply do what they might subjectively feel is right or just. Still, six months after the siege of Oka, it must have taken courage to declare so forthrightly to Canadian native peoples that for them there is no justice in the law, that in law their societies are simply irrelevant when they confront the societies formed by people of European descent.

The Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en case is probably not over. Legal scholars have already expressed surprise over McEachern's interpretations — in the Nisga'a (or Nishga) case of 1973, for instance, three judges of the Supreme Court of Canada reached conclusions directly contrary to his. There may be appeals to higher courts, or possibly the sheer bluntness of McEachern's finding will encourage political action to put some justice into Canadian law.

But the historical judgment in "Delgam Uukw versus the Queen" remains important. In effect, the B.C. Supreme Court has adopted the view once held by most Canadian historians — that native societies in Canada were barbarous, primitive, and mostly irrelevant to Canadian history.

In 1971 historian James St.G. Walker read a landmark paper to the Canadian Historical Association. "The Indian in Canadian Historical Writing" outlined in painful detail how generations of white Canadian historians had loved to portray natives as half-human, bloodlusting savages whose main contribution to Canadian history was the treacherous massacre of plucky white settlers.

A decade later, when he updated his analysis to cover historical writing of the seventies, Walker found that derogatory images of the Indian were vanishing and specialized studies of native history were proliferating. Yet the native presence still made little impact on how historians wrote Canadian history. "One of the things I was saying in the second article," says Walker now, "is that I was wrong in the first article. I thought if the specialist work was done, it would find its way into the mainstream and the textbooks. And it did not."

Historians and Native History

Has it yet? Walker has not yet written a study covering the eighties, but his general impression is not encouraging. "I have the impression that it is still not getting into the mainstream. There was lots of specialist stuff in the seventies, more in the eighties. But native history is still added on rather than integrated. Historians have a vision of what matters in Canadian history, and it is hard to change that. Really taking account of native history would require not just revising but rewriting."

Nevertheless, Walker feels the historical profession is at the threshold of a great change, that it is no longer only specialists in native history who are paying attention to native issues in Canadian history. There are still few native Canadians writing history — at least, history as we usually think of it. But white historians, whatever difficulty they have in integrating native nations into their texts, have come to accept that they exist, and that Canadian history simply does not make sense under any other assumption. Bruce Trigger — whose book *The Children of Aataentsic* may be the work of Canadian history most widely influential outside Canada — has argued that Canadian history simply cannot be understood without an understanding of native history as well.

"Delgam Uukw versus the Queen" suggests our legal establishment has not yet come so far. Judge McEachern is not persuaded that the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en are or ever have been nations. In his analysis, they cannot in law be considered equal to any nation formed by people of European descent. Terry Glavin, the journalist who covered the issue, finds that attitude deeply rooted in Canadian society. "You look at a B.C. road map, and some little town with three people in it is marked — if they are white people. Just down the road, a place with 1,400 natives simply is not there. We live in the midst of this amazing richness of culture, stories, characters, societies, and we don't even know they are there. Our kids go to sleep dreaming of McDonaldland characters."

But there are signs the intellectual establishment — to the extent we have one — is going over to a different point of view, and maybe that means the shift is inevitable. There may yet be judges with a different understanding of Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en history.

At one point in his judgment, Judge McEachern observes that, "what the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en describe as [their] law is really a most uncertain and highly flexible set of customs." If there is an optimistic reading possible in "Delgam Uukw versus the Queen," it is that historians of the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en case may one day say the same thing about the law of Canada. ♦

"Reasons for Judgment in Delgam Uukw versus the Queen" can be acquired from the Registry Office of the British Columbia Supreme Court in Vancouver.

"A Death Feast in Dimlahamid," by Terry Glavin (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990) is a journalist's account of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en during the trial of Delgam Uukw versus the Queen.

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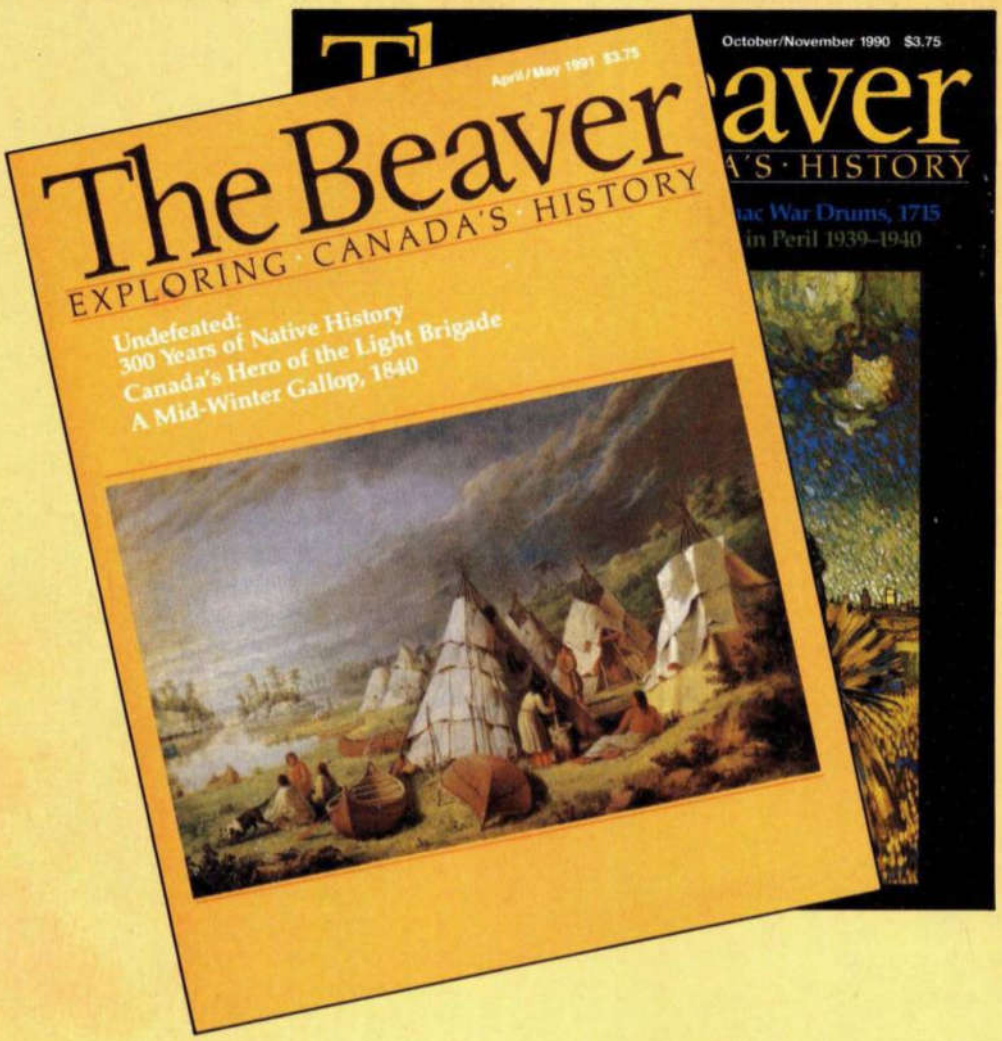

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